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THE
RIVAL SISTERS.

A
TRAGEDY.

BY ARTHUR MURPHY, ESQ.

SECOND EDITION.

Scelerate, revertere, Theseu;
Flecte ratem; numerum non habet ille suum. OVID.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION.
AS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE.

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P R E F A C E.

THERE is, perhaps, nothing more uninteresting than the generality of those preliminary discourses, in which Authors too frequently lay out much of their time in talking of themselves and their works. The importance of a Man to himself is fully displayed, while the Reader yawns over the tedious page, or laughs at the rhetoric, that would persuade him he ought to be pleased. The present Writer has been unwilling, upon almost all occasions, to conform to a practice which he saw attended with so little success: But the following Tragedy is sent into the world in a manner that may require some explanation. It has not gone through the fiery trial of the Theatre; nor is it recommended by the favourable decision of an Audience. The pomp of splendid scenery, and the illusions of the skilful performer, have not awakened the public attention:—The Play ventures abroad, without having previously gained, by the advantages of representation, a character, which in the leisure of the closet is not always supported. But this circumstance, while it raises no expectation, may, on the other hand, excite a prejudice not easy to be surmounted. If it be of any value, why was it not produced in the usual form of a Public Exhibition? The reasons that influenced the Author, would lead to a long and frivolous detail. Whatever those reasons were, whether caprice, whim, peevishness, or delicacy, they were of weight to determine his conduct. His work, however, does not go forth with accusations of any kind against the Proprietors of either Theatre: it makes no appeal from their judgment. The fact is, it never was in their hands; and where there was no refusal, there can be no room for complaint.

It need not be dissembled, that the Play was written with a view to the Stage. It was begun and finished in the Summer 1783, at a time when the Author was disabled, by a nervous disorder in

his eyes, from pursuing a more important work, which has engaged several years of his life. It was painful to read, and he found amusement necessary. He walked in green fields, made verses, and threw them upon paper in characters almost illegible. For a subject, he was not long at a loss. He remembered that *Madame de Sévigné* * mentions her having attended the representation of *ARIANE*, a Tragedy by the younger *Cornille*. The play, says that amiable Writer, though in its general style and conduct flat and insipid; was, notwithstanding, followed by all Paris, not for the sake of the poetry, but the Actress, *La Champmêlé*, whom she calls the greatest prodigy the Stage ever beheld. The others were disgusting; but when the *Champmêlé* entered the scene, a murmur of applause ran through the Theatre; every heart was interested, and every eye dissolved in tears.

WHEN this country could, with pride, boast of an Actress equally followed, and perhaps with better reason; it occurred that a Tragedy, with the beauties of the original, but freed from it's defects, might, at such a season, be acceptable to the Public. The defects, which drew down the judgment of so enlightened a Critic as *Madame de Sévigné*, are pointed out with minute exactness, by the judicious *Voltaire*†. From that pleasing Writer we learn, that the Tragedy in question still keeps it's rank upon the Stage, whenever an Actress of eminence wishes for an opportunity to display her talents in a principal character. The situation he observes, is interesting and pathetic: "A princess, who has done every thing for her hero; who has delivered him from a cruel death, and sacrificed all considerations for his sake; who loves him generously; who thinks herself loved in return, and deserves to be so; who finds herself, at last, abandoned by the Man whom she adores, and betrayed by a Sister whom she also loved: 'A woman thus situated,' says *Voltaire*, 'forms the happiest subject that has come down to us from antiquity.' Notwithstanding this general account, *Voltaire's* observations, which trace the Author scene by scene, show that *Madame de Sévigné* was not mistaken in her judgment.

* Vide her Letter 1st April, 1672.

† See his Edition of *Cornille's Works*.

SHALL the present Writer flatter himself that he has removed the vices of the first concoction, and substituted what is better? He has certainly endeavoured to do it. For this purpose a New Fable was necessary. The progress of the business required to be conducted in a different manner, with more rapidity, and without those languid scenes which weaken the interest, and too often border upon the dialogue of Comedy. The characters were to be cast in a new mould; and instead of definitions of the passions, their conflict, their vehemence, and their various transitions, were to be painted forth in higher colouring, than are to be found in the French composition. The Reader, therefore, is not to expect a mere translation. The Author does not scruple to say that he entered into a competition with the original; that he has aimed at a better Tragedy; and to use the words of a late elegant Writer, *he hopes he has shown some invention, though he has built upon another man's ground.*

BUT here again the question recurs, if the new superstructure raised upon the old foundation has any merit, why not produce it with all the advantage of that celebrated Actress, who, it seems inspired the first design? The plain truth shall be the answer: When the piece was finished, the Author had his moments of self-approbation, and in his first ardour, hinted to a friend, that he intended to give it to the Stage. But self-approbation did not last long:—That glow of imagination, which (to speak the truth) is sometimes heated into a pleasing delirium with its own work, subsided by degrees, and doubt and diffidence succeeded. A Play, that might linger nine nights upon the Stage, was not the object of the Author's ambition; Whether he has been able to execute any thing better, he has not considered for a long time, nor has he now courage to determine. He has often said to himself, in the words of TULLY, *Nihil huc, nisi perfectum ingenio, Elaboratum Industriâ, afferri oportere*; and after adopting, in his own case, so rigid a rule, how shall he presume to say, that the production of a summer can boast either of genius, or the elaborate touches of industry?

IN this irresolute state of mind, the Author's respect for the Public, who have done him, upon former occasions, very parti-

cular honour, increased his timidity : he was unwilling to appear a candidate for their favour, when he was not sure of adding to their pleasure. At present, being to give an edition of such pieces, as he has been able to produce, he could not think of keeping back the only dramatic work left upon his hands. He, therefore, sends it into the world an humble adventurer : with one of his predecessors, he says, '*Va mon Enfant ; prens ta Fortune.*' The Play amused him while he was engaged in the writing of it, and should the candid Reader find an hour of leisure not entirely thrown away in the perusal, the Author will not think his time altogether mis-employed. He now dismisses the Piece, if not with indifference, at least with resignation ; content to leave the honours of the Theatre to Writers of more ambition than he possesses at present.

Non jam prima peto Mnestheus, neque vincere certo :
Quamquam O! sed saperent, quibus hoc, Neptune, dedisti.

VIRG.

——— Veianius armis,
Herculis ad postem fixis, latet abditus agro;
Ne populum extremâ toties exoret arenâ.

HOR.

LINCOLN'S-INN,
March 4, 1786.



Dramatis Personæ.

DRURY-LANE.

Men.

PERIANDER, *King of Naxos*, - Mr. Wroughton.
THESEUS, - - - - Mr. Palmer.
PERITHOUS, - - - - Mr. Kemble.
ARCHON, *an Officer of Periander*, Mr. Packer.
ALETES, *Ambassador from Minos*,
King of Crete, - - - - Mr. Caulfield.
OFFICER, - - - - Mr. Phillimore.

Women.

ARIADNE, - - - - Mrs. Siddons.
PHÆDRA, - - - - Mrs. Powell

VIRGINS *attending on Ariadne, &c.*

SCENE, *the Palace of Periander, in the Isle of Naxos.*

THE
RIVAL SISTERS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

PERIANDER'S Palace. *A violent Storm of Thunder and Lightning.*
Enter PHÆDRA and ARCHON.

Phædra.

AWAY! no more!—why thus pursue my steps?
Begone and leave me; leave me to my woes.

Arc. Yet, Phædra, be advis'd.

Phæ. Presume no further.

Advis'd by thee! no,—let your pliant king,
Your king of Naxos, to thy treach'rous counsels
Resign himself, his people, and his laws.
Thou hast undone 'us all; by thee we die;
Yes, Ariadne, Phædra, Theseus, all,
All die by thee!

Arc. Princess, your fears are groundless.
Your timorous fancy forms unjust suspicions.
If you but knew me——

Phæ. O, too well I know thee!

This very morn 'tis fix'd; yes, here your king
Gives audience to th' Ambassador of Crete;
Here in this palace; here, by your persuasion,
He means to yield us to the rage of Minos,
To my vindictive father's stern demand.
Ere that I'll see your king; here wait his coming.
And counteract thy base ungen'rous counsel.

Arc. This storm of passion bears your reason down.
Let prudence guide thee. In a night like this,
Why quit your couch, and to the whirlwind's rage,
The vollied lightening, and the war of nature,
Why wilt thou thus commit thy tender frame?——

[Thunder and lightning.]

Again that dreadful peal!—"All-gracious Powers!
 "What crime provokes your wrath? must this fair island,
 "That long hath flourish'd in th' Ægean deep,
 "Must Naxos with her sons, a blameless race,
 "Burn to the centre, and the brawling waves
 "Close o'er the wreck for ever?

[Another clap of thunder.]

"Phæ. Oh, that burst
 "Shoots horror to my soul!
 "Arc. Thus through the night
 "Hath the wild uproar shook the groaning isle.
 "Fierce rain and liquid fire in mingled torrents
 "Came rushing o'er the land. The wrath of Heaven
 "Rides in the tempest. Towers and sacred domes
 "Fell in promiscuous ruin. Ships were dash'd,
 "On pointed rocks, or swallowed in the deep.
 "Destruction rages round:" amidst the roar,
 "When all things else, when ev'n the fiercest natures
 "Shrink from the hideous ruin, you alone
 "Walk through the storm, with fierce, with haggard mien,
 "A form that suits the dreadful wild commotion.

Phæ. Yes, with a heart, in which the storm that rages,
 Surpasses all the horrors of the night.

"Yes, here I come supreme in misery.
 "I only wake to cares unknown to him
 "Who treads secure the paths of humble life,
 "And thanks the gods for his obscure retreat,
 "For the blest shade in which their bounty plac'd him."

Phæ. 'Tis you have rais'd this tempest of the soul.
 You, sir, are minister; you govern here,
 And bend at will an unsuspecting monarch.
 To thee he yields his oracle of state;
 And when with wrongs you have oppress'd mankind,
 'Tis the king's pleasure; 'tis the royal will.

Arc. Unjust, ungenerous charge! have you forgot,
 When first your vessel reach'd the coast of Naxos?
 You sued for leave to land upon the isle:
 To pray for shelter here. Ere that we heard
 Theseus was with you: Theseus, whom the state
 Of Athens sent a sacrifice to Minos,
 A victim to absolve the annual tribute,
 Impos'd by conquest: Ariadne's love,
 Her generous efforts to redeem the hero,
 Ev'n then were known at Periander's court.
 The wond'rous story on the wings of Fame

Had reach'd our Isle; she pity'd, and she lov'd him.

Phæ. She lov'd him—Yes, she saw, and she ador'd.

Gods! who could see the graces of his youth,

His cause, his innocence, the hero's mien,

Manly and firm, yet soften'd by distress,

Gods! who could see him, and not gaze entranc'd

In ecstacy and love?—What have I said?

My warmth too far transports me—ah! beware

'Twas as you say; she pity'd, and she lov'd.

[*Aside.*]

Arc. She favour'd his escape: you fled together.

To ev'ry neighb'ring isle you wing'd your flight.

You visited each realm; with prayers and tears

Wearied each court. All fear'd your father's power.

You came to Naxos; Periander's will,

Your orator, came forth. Did not I then—

Phæ. You succour'd our distress: the tear of sympathy

Stood in your eye; and you may boast your merit—

You play'd it well, sir.

Arc. This ambiguous strain

But ill requites the offices of friendship;

For you I watch'd the temper of the king,

His ebbs and flows of passion: in apt season

You landed here. Thrice hath the waning moon

Conceal'd her light, and thrice renew'd her orb,

While you, meantime, have liv'd protected here.

Each hour has seen your sister Ariadne

Rise in her charms; and now with boundless sway

She reigns supreme in Periander's heart.

Phæ. True, we have found protection from your king.

Three months have pass'd—but in that time a statesman

May change his mind. New views of interest—

New plans of policy; fair seeming motives,

May give new principles.

Arc. It is my first.

My best ambition to relieve the wretched.

You wrong me, princess; you had best retire.

Phæ. No; Periander first shall hear my suit.

Here will I wait his coming; on the earth

Fall prostrate at his feet, implore his mercy,

Cling round his knees; and never loose my hold,

Till his heart melt, and save us from destruction.

Enter THESEUS.

The. What plaintive sorrow thro' the lonely palace
Alarms my list'ning ear?

Phæ. That well-known voice
Dispels my fears. O! Theseus, how my heart
Bounds at thy lov'd approach! and yet this day
Decides your doom.—Archon can tell you all.
This day resigns you to my father's power.
Here Periander has resolv'd to answer
Th' ambassador of Crete.

The. Controul thy fears.
Archon has serv'd me, and I thank him for it.
All will be well; the king protects us still.
Archon, the storm that threaten'd hideous ruin
At length subsides. The angry blast recalls
Its train of horrors. Through the sev'ring clouds
Faint gleams of day disclose the face of things.
The raging deep, that rose in mountain billows,
Sinks to repose: The winds, the waves are hush'd.
From yon high tower, that overhangs the bay,
I view'd the ocean round. No sail appears,
No vessel cleaves the deep, save one escap'd
From the wild uproar of the warring winds;
That with it's shatter'd masts, and lab'ring oars,
Stems the rough tide, and enters now the harbour.

Phæ. Another sail! and enters now the harbour!
From whence? Who and what are they? From what coast?
Alas, from Crete! 'tis Minos sends; my father's wrath
Pursues us still; another embassy
Comes to demand us all,
And banish ev'ry fear.

Arc. Perhaps some vessel
Rich with the stores, with busy commerce sends
From the adjacent isles, on Naxos' coast
Now seeks a shelter from the roaring deep—
I'll to the harbour. Theseus, be it thine
To pour o'er Phædra's woes the balm of comfort,
And hush her cares to peace. From Crete, I trust,
The messengers of woe no more will come,
To urge their stern demand.

[Exit.]

Phæ. Go, traitor, go;
Pernicious vile dissembler!

The. Ah! forbear.

Phæ. He seems a friend, the surer to betray.
Full well he knows that Ariadne's charms
Have wak'd a flame in Periander's heart.
To that alliance with a statesman's craft
He stands a foe conceal'd: He dreams to see

On Naxos' throne a queen from Minos sprung,
And therefore plans our ruin.

The. Yet thy fancy,
" Still arm'd against itself, turns pale and trembles
" At shadowy forms. Were thy suspicions just;
" Wherefore reveal them? Why unguard thyself,
" And lay each secret open to your foe?
" With him, whose rankling malice works unseen,
" While smiles becalm his looks, 'twere best pretend
" Not to perceive the lurking treachery—
" Reproof but goads him, and new whets his passions;
" Till what was policy becomes revenge—
" Detected villany can ne'er forgive.

Phæ. And must I fall in silence? must we perish,
" Abandon'd by ourselves, tame, willing victims;
" Nor let the murd'rer hear one dying groan?
" Must I behold him with his treach'rous arts,
" A lurking foe, nor pour my curses on him;
" But poorly crouch, and thank him for the blow?
" Oh! love like mine, the love which you inspired,
" That each day rises still to higher ardour;
" Think'it thou that love like mine will calmly see thee
" Giv'n up a victim to my father's rage?"

The. And think'it thou then that Archon is my foe?

Phæ. He is; I know him well; he means destruction.
Th' ambassador of Crete will soon have audience.

Archon concerted all. Oh! if my care
Could counteract his dark, his fell designs,
Then were I blest indeed. When first you landed
A helpless victim on the Cretan shore;
Full well you know, soft pity touch'd my heart,
And soon, that tender pity chang'd to love.
I wish'd to save you: Ariadne's fortune
Gave her the clue that led you thro' the maze.
Her zeal out-ran my speed, but not my love.
And would my fate allow me now to save thee,
Then by that tie ('tis all my sister's claim)
I then should prove me worthy of thy love.

The. Deem me not, gen'rous Phædra, deem me not
Form'd of such common clay, so dead to beauty,
As not to feel with transport at my heart
Thy powerful charms. To Ariadne
I owe my life. That boon demands respect,
Demands my gratitude: But love must spring
Spontaneous in the heart, it's only source,

Unmix'd with other motives than it's own;
Unbrib'd, unbought—above all vulgar ties.

Phæ. And yet while ruin——

The. Check this storm of passion,
Nor think, with abject fear that Periander
Will e'er resign us. Ariadne's charms
Have touch'd his heart. "His words, his looks proclaim it,
"In the soft tumult all his soul is lost,
"He dwells for ever on the lov'd idea,
"And with her beauty means to grace his throne."
"*Phæ.* Archon abhors the union : To prevent it,
"His deep designs——"

Hear what I shall disclose,
And treasure it in sacred silence seal'd.
Last night admitted to a private audience,
Wrapt in the friendly mantle of the dark——

Enter an OFFICER.

The. What would'st thou ? speak thy purpose.

Of. At the harbour
That fronts the northern wave, a ship from Athens
This moment is arriv'd.

Phæ. Relief from Athens !

Of. Your presence there by all is loudly call'd for.

The. Say to my friends, I will attend them straight.

[Exit Officer,

Phæ. A ray of hope to gild the cloud of woe.

The. Now *Phædra*, mark me. Let thy fears subside.
Last night when ev'ry care was lull'd to rest,
No eye to trace my steps, no conscious ear
To catch the sound, then Periander granted
A private conference : I unbosom'd to him,
In confidence, the secrets of my heart.
To Ariadne I resign'd all claim ;
Renounc'd each tender passion. Periander
No longer view'd me with a rival's eye.
He promis'd his protection. Ariadne
Has pow'rful charms, and the king bears a heart
To beauty not impassive. Joy and rapture
Spoke in his eye, and purpled o'er his face.
With vanity she'll hear a monarch's sighs,
Proud of her sway. A diadem will quench
Her former flame, with glitt'ring splendor tempt her,
And make the infidelity her own.

Phæ. But if she hears a sister dares dispute
A heart like thine——

The. Truſt to my prudent caution.
That dang'rous ſecret I have ſcreen'd with care.
Here it lies buried. Periander thinks
A former flame, kindled long ſince in Greece,
Preys on my heart with ſlow conſuming fires,
But hark—beware —this way ſome haſty ſtep.

Enter ARCHON.

Arc. The Greeks now iſſue on the beck. They bring
Tidings from Athens, and from every tongue
Your name reſounds, and rings along the ſhore.

The. Thy friendſhip knows no pauſe; each hour your bring
New ſuccour to the wretched. Princeſs, farewell.
Archon, I thank thee, and now ſeek my friends. [*Exit.*

Arc. Princeſs, if once again I may preſume
To offer friendly counſel; from this place
'Twere beſt you now retire. Yon' eaſtern clouds
Bluſh with the orient day. My royal maſter,
Attentive ever to the cares of ſtate,
Will ſoon be here.

Phæ. Let him firſt hear my pray'r;
Permit me here to ſee him. To the voice
Of miſery his ear will not be cloſ'd.

[*A flouriſh of Trumpets.*

Enter PERIANDER, and attendant Officers.

Oh! Periander' 'midſt the nations ſam'd
For wiſdom and for juſtice, let thy heart
Incline to mercy. Spare, oh, ſpare the wretched.

Perian. Riſe, Princeſs, riſe. That humble ſuppliant ſtate
Suits not the dignity of Minos' daughter.
Whence this alarm, and why thoſe guffing tears?

Phæ. We fled for refuge to you. Oh! proteſt,
Proteſt the innocent. You gave us ſhelter;
It was a godlike act; recal it not;
Yield us not victims to a father's wrath;
Nor by one barbarous action fully all
The glories of your reign. Save Ariadne,
Save Theſeus too: our miſery claims reſpect.

Perian. Save Ariadne! can that beauteous mourner
Suspect my promis'd faith? perhaps ev'n now,

Like some frail flow'r by beating rains oppress'd,
 She pining droops, and sickens in despair.
 Oh! quickly seek her: with the words of comfort
 Heal all her woes; raise that afflicted fair,
 And bid the graces of her matchless form
 Flourish secure beneath my fostering smile.
 When Ariadne sues, a monarch's heart
 Yields to her tears with transport.

Phæ. Men will praise

The gen'rous deed: the gods will bless thee for it.

[*Exit.*]

Arc. The Ambassador from Crete with Minos' orders
 Attends your royal will.

Perian. He shall be heard.

[*He ascends his Throne.*]

Enter ALETES.

Perian. To Naxos' court, Aletes, you are welcome.
 You come commission'd from the Cretan king:
 Now speak your embassy.

Al. In fairest terms

Of friendly greeting Minos, sir, by me
 Imparts his rightful claim. He knows the justice,
 The moderation that directs your counsels:
 He knows, though oft' in the embattled field
 Your sword has reek'd with blood, your wisdom still
 Respects the rights of kings; respects the laws,
 That hold the nations in the bonds of peace.
 To you, sir, he appeals; he claims his daughters,
 His rebel daughters, leagu'd against his crown:
 He claims the victim from his vengeance refused;
 Rescued by fraud, by Ariadne's fraud;
 And here at Naxos shelter'd from his justice.
 A sov'reign and a parent claims his rights.
 You will respect the father and the king.

Perian. Of Minos' virtues, his renown in arms,
 His plan of laws, that spread around the blessings
 Of sacred order, and of social life;
 Laws, which even kings obey, the world has heard
 With praise, with gratitude. All must revere
 The legislator, and the friend of man:
 But in the sorrows that distract his house,
 Is it for me with rash mistaken zeal
 To interpose my care? is it for me
 To judge his daughter's conduct? What decree,

What law of mine, what policy of Naxos
Have they offended? All who roam the deep
Find in my ports a safe, a sure retreat.
Should I comply with your proud, bold request,
The hardy genius of this sea-girt isle
Would call it tyranny, and power usurp'd;
'Tis law, and not the sov'reign's will, that here
Controuls, directs, and animates the state.

Al. The law that favours wrongs, and shelters guilt,
Subverts all order. Through her hundred cities
All Crete will mourn your answer. With regret
Minos will hear it. By pacific means
He would prevail; by justice, not the sword.
But, Sir, if justice, if a righteous cause
At your tribunal lift their voice in vain,
I see the gath'ring storm; I see the dangers
That hover round your isle, and o'er the scene
Humanity lets fall the natural tear.
The sons of Crete, a brave, a gen'rous race,
Active and ardent in their monarch's cause
Already grasp the sword. "I see the ocean
" White with unnumber'd sails; your coast, your harbours
" Beleaguer'd close. I see the martial bands
" Planting their banners on the well-fought shore;
" Your hills, your plains glitt'ring with hostile arms,
" Your cities sack'd, your villages on fire,
" While from its source each river swoln with carnage
" Runs crimson to the main. I see the conqueror
" Urge to your capital with rapid march,
" And desolation cov'ring all the land.
" Still, Sir, you may prevent this waste of blood;
" Your timely wisdom——"

Perian. The scope appears
Of your fair seeming message. And does Minos,
Fam'd as he is in arms, say, does he hope
With proud imperious sway to lord it o'er
The Princes of the world? And does he mean
To write his laws in blood? And must the nations
Crouch at his nod? Must I upon my throne
Look pale and tremble, when your fancied Jove
Grasps the unlifted thunder? Tell your king
He knows my warlike name—knows we have met
In fields of death, oppos'd in adverse ranks,
Braving each other's lance—he knows the sinew,
With which this arm can wield the deathful blade,

Or send the missive javelin on the foe,
Thirsting for blood.—Go, bear my answer back,
And say besides, that Naxos boasts a race
Rough as their clime, by liberty inspir'd;
Of stubborn nerve, and unsubmitting spirit,
Who laugh to scorn a foreign master's claim.
You've spoke your embassy, and have our answer.

Al. Unwilling I bear hence th' ungrateful tidings.

[*Exit.*

Perian. To-morrow's sun shall see him spread his sails :
He must not linger here.

Arc. Your pardon, Sir,
This answer may provoke the powers of Crete,
And war, inevitable war ensues.

Perian. Let the invader come, here we have war
To meet his bravest troops.

Arc. But where the numbers
To man each port, and line the sea-beat shore ?
Within the realm should the foe flush'd with conquest
Rear his proud banner——

Perian. With auxiliar aid
Greece will espouse my cause. The fleets of Athens
Full soon shall cover the Ægean deep,
And with confederated bands repel
A tyrant's claim.

Arc. Each state will urge its claim.
Minos demands his daughter : Greece expects
Her gallant warrior, and ev'n now asserts
To crown his love, the princess, as her own.
Let Theseus spread his sails, and steer for Greece,
With Ariadne, partner of his flight.
You gain that gen'rous state : by ev'ry tie
Of honour bound, Athens unsheaths her sword.
And haughty Minos threatens here in vain.

Perian. Yield Ariadne ! yield that matchless beauty,
Where all the loves, where all the graces dwell !
No, I will save her ; will protect her here
From rude unhallow'd violence. Do thou
Haste to the palace, where the princess dwells ;
Say to th' attendant train, ourself will come,
To tell the counsels which my heart has form'd.

Arc. Ay, there it lies,—there lurks the secret wound
Love strikes the sweet infection to his soul,
'Tis as I fear'd. [*Aside.*]—Perhaps by mild remonstrance
We may gain time, and by the specious arts.
Of treaty and debate prevent the war.

Perian. You know my orders ; see them straight obeyed.

[*Exit* Arc.]

Perian. Yes, Ariadne, from the inclement storms
Of thy rude fortune, it is fix'd to shield thee,
And soften all thy woes. Her father then,
When with her milder ray returning reason
Becalms his breast, shall thank the friend that held
His rage suspended, and with joy shall hear
That 'Ariadne reigns the queen of Naxos ;
Here rules with gentle sway a willing people,
And with her virtues dignifies a throne.

[*Exit.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.*Enter PERIANDER, with Attendants.**Periander.*

LET all with duty, with observance meet,
 Wait on the princeſs: let the virgin train
 With ſongs of rapture, and melodious airs
 Try their beſt art; wake all the magic pow'r
 Of harmony, to ſooth that tender breaſt,
 And with ſoft numbers lull each ſenſe of pain,
 I have beheld her, gaz'd on ev'ry charm,
 And Ariadne triumphs in my heart.

*Enter ARCHON.**Arc.* A meſſenger from Athens waits your pleaſure.*Perian.* From Athens, ſay'ſt thou?*Arc.* In the northern bay

His ſhip is moor'd. Theſeus attends the ſtranger;
 And both now crave an audience.

Perian. In apt time.

Their meſſenger arrives: when war impends,
 Tidings from Athens are right welcome to me:
 They breathe new vigour. Let the Greek approach.

Enter THESEUS and PERITHOUS.

The. Forgive the tranſports of a heart that ſwells
 Above all bounds, when I behold my friend,
 My gallant, gen'rous friend, the brave Perithous!
 It glads my ſoul, thus to preſent before you
 A chief renown'd in arms, the beſt of men,
 My other ſelf, the partner of my toils,
 And my beſt guide to glory.

Perian. To the virtues
 Of the brave chief my ear is not a ſtranger,
 You come from Athens?

Perit. Scarce two days have paſſ'd
 Since thence I parted. Through the realms of Greece
 Fame ſpread at large th' adventures of my friend,

With Ariadne's glory, and the deed,
 The gen'rous deed, that snatch'd him from destruction;
 How she conveyed him to this happy shore,
 How he has been receiv'd and shelter'd here.
 The men of Athens, sensibly alive
 To each fine motive, each exalted purpose,
 Have heard with gratitude. My feeble voice
 Would but degrade the sentiments that burn
 In ev'ry breast, with joy and rapture fir'd
 Warm with the best sensations of the heart,
 They pour their thanks, the tribute of their praise.

Perian. The praise that's offer'd by the sons of Greece,
 By that herioc, that enlighten'd race,
 Is the best meed fair virtue can receive.

Perit. That fair reward is yours: your worth demands it.
 To my brave friend Athens next points her care.

"What crime is his? Did he imbrue his hands
 "In young Androgeus' blood? Why should he fall
 "To expiate the death of Minos' son?
 "Against the innocent who makes reprisals,
 "And on the blameless head lets fall the sword,
 "Offers up victims to his fell revenge.
 "'Tis murder, and not justice.

Perian. Righteous Heaven
 "In th' hour of danger has watch'd o'er your friend,
 "And he has triumph'd o'er their barb'rous rites,
 "Their savage law, the stain of Minos' reign."

Perit. Exulting now she pants for his return.
 In crowds her eager citizens go forth,
 And on the beach, and on the wave-worn cliff,
 O'er all the main rowl their desiring eyes,
 And ask of ev'ry ship that ploughs the deep,
 News of their hero. A whole people's voice
 Chose me their delegate, their faithful officer,
 To seek my friend, and bear him hence with speed
 Back to his native land.

Perian. The laws of Naxos
 To all are equal. None are here constrain'd
 None forced by violence, or lawless pow'r,
 To quit this safe, this hospitable shore.
 Theseus will use the rights of free-born men.
 'Tis his to give the answer.

The. For this goodness
 My heart o'erflows with more than words can speak.

Perit. All Greece will thank you.—Ariadne too——

Perian. How?—Ariadne, say'st thou?

Perit. With delight,

With admiration, with unbounded transport,
Athens has heard her gen'rous exploits;
Has heard, when Theseus on the Cretan shore
Arriv'd to glut their vengeance, how the tear
Bedew'd her cheek. She pitied his misfortunes,
And whom she snatch'd from death, she means to bless
With that rare beauty, and connubial love.

Perian. Ha! do'st thou come to sink me to a slave?

'Tis pride; 'tis arrogance makes this demand.

Must I obey the proud imperious mandate?

Bear Ariadne with you!—By yon' Heaven,

No pow'r on earth shall force her from the isle.——

“If thou presum'st again——”

“*Perit.* I never have,

“I never can presume——”

“*Perian.* 'Tis insolence!—

“Is this the praise? Are these the thanks you bring?

“Urge that request no more.——”

Perit. If to my words

You'll deign to lend a favourable ear——”

“*Perian.* Say, on what law does Athens found a right

“To claim an alien prince's?

“*Perit.* When her choice,

“Her gen'rous choice, the impulse of the heart,

“Inclines her will, you will not fetter freedom?”

Perian. Her father claims her:—dost thou vainly hope,

That Greece can silence his paternal rights?

Is that your errand?—Who commission'd thee?—

Is Theseus your adviser? and does he

Second this proud attempt?

The. No, Theseus never

Will plan, or counsel what may stain your honour.

Perit. Nor will he e'er forget,—I know him well—

I know his gratitude, his gen'rous warmth,

His constancy and truth—He'll ne'er forget

His vows of faithful love. The debt he owes

To Ariadne never can be paid.

Athens approves their union; tuneful bards

Prepare the tribute of immortal verse,

And white-rob'd virgins ev'n now are ready,

Where e'er she treads, to scatter at her feet

The blooming spring, and at the sacred altar

To hymn the bridal song.

The. Unthinking man !

This blind mistaken zeal will ruin all.

[*Aside.*

Perian. No more ! I'll hear no more !—here break we off.

Proud Greek, forbear, nor wound again my ear

With terms of vile disgrace. Another word

Of yielding Ariadne, and by Heaven

The claims of Minos—His ambassador

Is here at hand ; once more I'll give him audience.

And if again this outrage to my crown,—

If Theseus is found tampering in your plot,—

If you presume, by subtlety and fraud, [*To Theseus.*

To mock my hopes, and after last night's conference,

Renounce your honour, my resentment rous'd

May do a deed to overwhelm you all in ruin ;

Then, let your friend, when next he dares approach us,

Learn to respect a monarch, who disdains

A proud demand from the vain states of Greece.

[*Exit.*

Perit. The states of Greece, proud monarch ! be assur'd,

Will vindicate their rights.—Ha !—why that look

Of wild dismay ? that countenance of sorrow ?

Explain ;—what means my friend ?

The. Alas ! you know not,

You little know the horror and despair

In which the hand of fate has plung'd my soul.

“ *Perit.* And can despair oppress thee ? can thy heart

“ Know that pale inmate ? By our dangers past,

“ By all our wars, spite of this braggart king,

“ The beauteous Ariadne shall be thine.

“ *The.* No more ; no more of that :—I cannot speak—”

Perit. Those falt'ring accents, and those lab'ring sighs
Import some strange alarm.

“ *The.* Oh ! lead me hence,

“ To meet the fiercest monsters of the desert,

“ Rather than bear this conflict of the mind !

“ *Perit.* Unfold this mystery.”—Those downcast eyes——

The. You have awaken'd Periander's fury.

Thy words have led me to a precipice,

And I stand trembling on the giddy brink.

Perit. From thence I'll lead thee to the peaceful vale,

To life and happiness.—And can you thus,

When all your country's wishes bless your name,

When Athens to promote your happiness——

The. They may mis-judge my happiness :—Alas !

I thank them :—little do they know of Theseus.

Perit. They know your virtues, your heroic ardour,
Your patriot toil in the great cause of Greece :
They know that honour in your breast has fix'd
Her sacred shrine : They know the gen'rous flame
That love has wak'd in Ariadne's breast,
And how, in gratitude, the bright idea
Must fire a soul like thine.——

The. Too deep, too deep

“ Each accent pierces here.

[*Aside.*

“ *Perit.* Those faithful arms

“ Shall soon receive her.”

The. You should not have claim'd her.

Perit. Not claim that excellence ! that rarest beauty——

“ *The.* By that mistaken claim you've rais'd a storm

“ That soon may burst in ruin on my head.

“ You've fir'd to madness Periander's soul,

“ And wounded me, here in the tend'rest nerve,

“ That twines about the heart. For Ariadne”

Thy suit is vain, 'tis fruitless : urge no more.

Let me embark for Greece ; gain my dismissal ;

But for the princess, name her not : her liberty

The heart of Periander ne'er will grant :

No words that e'er were form'd will wring it from him.

Perit. Not grant her freedom ! not release her hence !

Should he refuse, all Greece will rise in arms :

One common cause will form the gen'rous league.

Soon Periander shall behold the ocean

White with the foam of twenty thousand ships ;

The Grecian phalanx posted on his hills,

And his defenceless island wrapt in flames.

The. Let Greece forget me, nor in such a cause

Unchain the fury of wide-wasting war.

Oh ! not for me such slaughter.

Perit. Think'st thou Greece

Will see thee torn from Ariadne's arms ?

From her who sacrific'd her all for thee ?

From her whose courage has brav'd ev'ry danger ;

Fled from her country, from her father's court,

To save her hero's life ? From her, whose beauty

Already is the praise of wond'ring Greece,

Surpassing all that lavish fancy forms.

I know the princess ; the revolving year

Has not yet clos'd it's round, since I beheld her

The pride, the glory of the Cretan dams.

" That harmony of shape, that winning grace ;
 " And when she moves, that dignity of mien !
 " Those eyes, whose quick and inexpressive glance
 " Brightens each feature, while it speaks the soul."

The. Thou need'st not, oh ! my friend, thou need'st not point
 Her beauties to my heart,—Each charm is her's,
 Softness and dignity in union sweet,
 And each exalted virtue. Nature form'd her
 The hero's wonder, and the poet's theme.

Perit. You shall not lose her, by yon' Heaven you shall not.
 I'll seek the king ; apprise him of his danger,
 Unmoor my ship, remeasure back the deep,
 And bring the fleets of Athens to his harbour.

" *The.* It must not be ; no Periander's soul
 " Is firm, heroic, unsubdu'd by danger.
 " His sudden rage, his irritated pride
 " Will seal my doom : The deputies from Crete
 " Are here to claim their victim : Periander sees
 " Each charm, each grace of Ariadne's form,
 " And sends his rival hence to instant death."

" *Perit.* I can prevent him ; can elude his malice.
 " This very night, when all is wrapt in darkness,
 " Embark with me. The partner of your heart
 " Shall be our lovely freight. I'll bear her hence
 " Far from the tyrant's pow'r. I'll lead you both
 " To Athens' happy realm, the growing school
 " Of laurell'd science, and each lib'ral art,
 " Of laws, and polish'd life, where both may shine
 " The pride, the lustre of a wond'ring world,
 " Dear to each other, and to after-times
 " The pattern of all truth and faithful love."

The. Wretch that I am !—his ev'ry word presents
 My inward self, the horrors of my guilt.

[*Aside.*]

Perit. Theseus,—that alter'd look,—those sighs renew'd !
 Some hoarded grief,——

The. Enquire no more but leave me.

Perit. I cannot, will not leave thee : tell me all.
 Some load of secret grief weighs on thy spirit.

The. There let it lodge, there swell, and burst my heart.

Perit. You terrify your friend : Why heaves that groan ?
 Why those round drops, just starting from thy eye,
 Which manhood combating forbids to fall ?

The. I see my guilt.

Perit. Your guilt !

The. I feel it all.

Perit. If there is ought that labours in thy breast——

The. Here, here it lies.

Perit. To me unbosom all.

The. Perithous, would'st thou think it?—Oh! my friend,
I owe to Ariadne more,—alas! much more
Than a whole life of gratitude can pay.

And yet——

Perit. Go on : unload thy inmost thoughts ;
A friend may heal the wound.

The. Oh ! no ; thou'lt scorn me,
Abjure, detest, abhor me.—Wilt thou pardon
The frailties of a heart, that drives me on,
Endears the crime, and yet upbraids me still ?
In me thou seest—who can controul his love ?
In me thou seest——

Perit. Speak ; what ?

The. A perjur'd villain !

The veriest traitor, that e'er yet deceiv'd
A kind, a generous, a deluded maid ;
And for his life preserv'd, for boundless love,
Can only answer with dissembling looks,
With counterfeited smiles, with fruitless thanks ;
While with resistless charms another beauty——

Perit. Another ! gracious pow'rs !

The. She kindles all

The passions of my soul ; charms ev'ry sense,
And Phædra reigns the sov'reign of my heart.

Perit. Her sister Phædra !——“ and does she aspire
“ To guilty joys ; Does she admit your love ? ”
Does she too join you in the impious league ?
Will she thus wound a sister, and receive
A traitor, a deserter to her arms ?

The. On me, on me let fall thy bitterest censure,
But blame her not.

Perit. Not blame her !—Who can hear
A tale like this, and not condemn you both ?
Th' ungen'rous act will tarnish all your fame.

The. Forbear, my friend ; the god of love inspir'd——

Perit. Some fiend, a foe to ev'ry generous instinct,
A foe to all that 's fair, or great in man,
Insus'd the baleful poison through your soul.

The. The guilt is mine : But spare, oh ! spare my Phædra,
A single glance from those love-beaming eyes
Inflames each thought, and hurries me to madness.

Hark! [*Soft music is heard*] Ariadne comes!—this way, my friend;
 Thou still canst serve me. With a lover's ardour
 The King beholds her, and with earnest suit
 He woos her to his throne. Let us retire;
 Thou still canst guide me through the maze of fate. [*Exeunt.*]

SCÈNE II.

Soft Music is heard. Enter ARIADNE, with a train of Virgins.

" 1st. Vir. Now, Ariadne, now, my royal mistress,
 " Propitious fortune smiles, and from this day
 " The gods prepare a smiling train of years."

Ari. I thank you, Virgins; this kind of sympathy
 Shows you have hearts that feel another's bliss.

" Oh! much I thank you, virgins; yet this day
 " Dispels the clouds, that hover'd o'er my head."

Thou source of life, thou bright, thou radiant god,
 Who through creation pour'st thy flood of glory,
 All hail thy golden orb! " Thou com'st to quell

" The howling blast, to bid the tempest cease,

" And aker all the horrors of the night,

" To cheer the face of nature!—Oh! to me

" Thou com'st propitious, in thy bright career

" Leading thy festive train. The circling hours

" That smile with happier omens, as they pass

" Shedding down blessings from their balmy wings,

" Prepare thy way rejoicing; with thee come

" Bright Hope, and rose-lip'd Health, and pure delight,

" And love and joy, the sunshine of the soul."

" 1st. Vir. Be all your hours like this: may no misfortune

" O'ercloud the scene; and may you ne'er have cause

" To dim the lustre of those eyes in tears."

Ari. Oh, from this day! From this auspicious day,

Theseus is mine; " The godlike hero's mine,

" With ev'ry grace, with ev'ry laurel crown'd,

" The lover's softness, and the warrior's fire.

" A monarch now protects him; he has pledg'd

" His Royal word—But O, my love!"

Swift as some God, that mounts the viewless winds,

And cleaves the liquid air, thou should'st have flown

To tell me all, to bless me with thy presence,

And bid the news more joyful touch my ear,

Rais'd and endear'd by that enchanting tongue.

" Why does he loiter thus?"

" 1st. Vir. His friends from Greece

" Perhaps detain him."

Ari. "Oh! it must be so,
 "And without cause I chide his ling'ring stay.
 "A ship from Greece to claim us! mighty gods!
 "When your displeasure smote me, when your wrath,
 "Severely just, gave to my trembling lip
 "The cup of bitterness, to your high will
 "I bow'd in reverence down; I bore it all,
 "For Theseus' sake, I bore it all with patience;
 "And 'midst our sorrows, with a dawn of gladness
 "I sooth'd his wounded spirit; teach me now,
 "Oh! teach me how to bear this tide of joy,
 "Nor with excess of bounty try too much
 "A heart that melts, that languishes with love."

Enter PHAEDRA.

Ari. Oh! Phædra, why this long, unkind delay?
 The gods restore my Theseus to my arms.

Phæ. If the protecting gods from Theseus' head
 Ward off th' impending blow, none more than Phædra
 Will feel the gen'ral joy. But still my fears——

Ari. Suppress them all. Theseus has nought to fear.
 But where, where is he? whither has he wander'd?

Say, tell me all, and speak to me of Theseus.

In vain I ask it. "Though his name delights

"My list'ning ear, yet you will never charm me

"With the lov'd praises of the godlike man."

On Periander's name you often dwell,

In strains, that in a heart not touch'd like mine,

Might stir affection.—Not a word of Theseus:

Why silent thus?—it is unkind reserve.

Alas, my sister, thy unruffled temper

Knows not the tender luxury of love,

That joys to hear the object it adores

Approv'd, admir'd of all, when ev'ry tongue

Grows lavish in his praise, then, then, with ecstacy

The heart runs over and with pride we listen.

Phæ. I have been just to Theseus; never wrong'd him.

His fame in arms has fill'd the nations round;

And purple victory in fields of death

For him has often turn'd the doubtful scale.

Ari. Unkind, ungen'rous praise! Has no one told you

His brave exploits? the number of his battles?

But who can count them? Fame exalts her trump,

Delighted with his name to swell the note;

And victory exulting claps her wings,
Still proud to follow, where he leads the way.

Phæ. So fame reports.—With what unbounded rage
Her passions kindle.—She alarms my fears.

[*Aside.*]

Ari. Why that averted look? Of late, my sister,
Of late I've mark'd thee with dejected mien,
Pensive and sad.—If aught of discontent
Weighs on thy heart, disclose it all to me.
“In ev'ry state of life, in all conditions,”
With thee I have unloaded ev'ry secret,
Fled to your arms, and sigh'd forth all my care.

Phæ. Does Ariadne think my love abated?

Ari. No, Phædra, no; I harbour no mistrust.
I know thy virtues:—We grew up together,
Knit in the bands of love. No op'ning grace
That sparkled in thy eye, or dawn'd in mine,
Could prompt the little passions of our sex.
We heard each other's praise, and envy slept.
And sure had Theseus, though with boundless ardour
I now must love him, to distraction love him;
Yet if my Theseus had first fix'd on thee,
I could, I think I could, have seen you happy
In his loved arms, and hero as he is
I had resign'd him to you.—Why that sigh,
Phædra? way fall those tears?

Phæ. Forgive your sister;
If still she fears for thee—Her ev'ry look,
Each word she utters pierces to my heart.

[*Aside.*]

Ari. Speak, tell me why is this? why thus alarm me?
I never had a thought conceal'd from thee.

Enter THESEUS and PERITHOUS.

Ari. Oh! Theseus, in thy absence ev'ry moment
Was counted with a sigh. “Support me, help me;
“For I am faint with bliss.”

“*The.* Revive, revive;
“Recall thy fleeting strength. Your counsels, Phædra,
“Will best assist her; your persuasive voice
“Will charm her sense, and banish all her cares.

“*Phæ.* At his lov'd sight, what new emotions rise!” [*Aside.*]

The. My friend Perithous from the realms of Greece—

Ari. Perithous here! the messenger from Athens!
When last you sojourn'd at my father's court;
(The sun has circled since his annual round)

I well remember you, admir'd of all.
 Men heard and praised the wonder of your friendship
 "For Theseus, then a stranger to those eyes,
 "But since beheld, and ah! beheld to charm
 "The heart of Ariadne!—you come now
 "To succour our distress."

Perit. In evil hour
 I sail'd from Greece. Would I had ne'er embark'd.

Ari. My heart dies in me.—Say what new event——
 Theseus explain, and tell me, tell me all.

The. Oh! I was born to be th' unceasing curse
 Of Ariadne's life; still, still indebted,
 Unable to repay.

Ari. Thou generous man!
 To hear those sounds, and view thee thus before me,
 O'er pays me now for all my sufferings past.

Enter ARCHON.

Arch. Theseus, on matters of some new concern,
 To me unknown, your presence is required.
 'Tis Periander's order.

The. I obey.

Ari. What may this mean? yet, Theseus, ere you go—

The. My friend will tell each circumstance; from him
 You'll calmly hear it all. And may his voice,
 Soft as the breeze that pants in eastern groves
 Approach your ear, and sooth your thoughts to peace.

[*Exit with Archon.*]

Ari. The gods will watch thy ways, and Periander
 Has promis'd still to shield thy suffering virtue.

Phæ. I dread some mischief: Ariadne, here
 Wait my return: I'll follow to the palace,
 And bring the earliest tidings of his fate.

[*Exit.*]

Ari. My heart is chill'd with fear. What dark event—
 Can Periander—no; dishonour never
 Will stain his name.—And yet that awful pause!
 Those looks with grief overwhelm'd!

Perit. Yes, grief indeed
 Sits heavy at my heart.—

Ari. Reveal the cause;
 Give me to know the worst. This dread suspense—

Perit. Oh! that in silence I could ever hide
 From you, from all, and in oblivion bury
 What here is lodg'd, and shakes my soul with horror!

Ari. With horror ! wherefore ? is not Theseus safe ?
Does not his country claim him ? Does not Greece
With open arms expect him ? Does not Athens
Send you with orders to demand us both ?

Perit. From thence your dangers rise : the sons of Athens,
A quick, inconstant, fluctuating race—

Ari. Yet ever wise, heroic, gen'rous brave,
All soul, all energy. Do they oppose
Our nuptial union ? Do they still retain
Their old hostility ? Do they exclude
An alien princess from the throne of Athens ?
If such their will, take, take the sov'reign sway,
Th' imperial diadem, the pomp of state :
Let Theseus to his father's rights succeed,
And reign alone ; make me his wedded wife ;
'Tis all I ask ; " the Gods can grant no more."
Thrones, sceptres, grandeur ! love can scorn you all.

Perit. Unhappy Theseus ! by disastrous fate
Doom'd to betray such excellence ; to see
The fairest gift of Heaven, and spurn it from him.

[*Aside.*

Ari. You answer not : speak and resolve my doubts.
Pity a heart, too tenderly alive,
And wild with fear, " that throbs, that aches like mine.
Thy pure, exalted mind will tower above
The arts of mean equivocating phrase.
You'll not deceive a fond, a faithful woman.

Perit. None should deceive you ; none. You will forgive
My hesitating fears. I would not wound
That tender frame with aught that may alarm you.
For thee my mind misgives : the fear that awes me
Pays homage to your virtue.

Ari. And does Greece
Reject the love I proffer ?

Perit. No, all Greece
Reveres your honour'd name : Th' Athenian state
By me demands your liberty. In terms
Of earnest import I have urg'd their claim ;
But Periander,—to his ardent spirit
You are no stranger.—He no sooner heard
The name of Ariadne, than with fiercest rage—
Perhaps you know the cause—with high disdain
He spurn'd at the demand. Some hidden motive—
'Tis love perhaps—you will forgive my boldness—
'Tis love, perhaps, that prompts the stern reply
Should I presume once more to urge the claim,

Theseus that moment must embark for Crete.
 So says the king : he will not brook a rival.
 You'll see your lover torn by ruffians from you ;
 You'll see the ship bound swiftly o'er the waves ;
 In vain you'll shriek ; in vain extend your arms,
 And call on Theseus lost !

Ari. That savage purpose
 The soul of Periander will disdain.

Perit. What will not love persuade ? love made you fly
 Your father's court ; and love may teach a monarch
 To break all bonds, and tow'r above the laws.

Ari. If this be what alarms you——

Perit. Theseus' life
 Once more depends on thee.——

Ari. To save that life

Is there an enterprise, a scene of danger,
 That Ariadne will not dare to meet ?

Perit. Your wond'rous daring on the wings of fame
 Has reached the nations round. But now, alas !
 One only way is left.

Ari. Direct me to it.

Perit. To Periander lend a gracious ear.
 For thee he sighs ; for thee his vows ascend.
 His throne awaits thee ; the imperial crown——

Ari. Sir, do you know me ?

“ *Perit.* Princess here to reign
 “ In this fair island.——

“ *Ari.* Do you know the spirit

“ That rules this breast, and o'er informs my soul ? ”

Perit. Forgive the zeal that prompts me to this office.
 The king intensely loves ; and in a base,
 Degen'rate world, from which all truth is fled,
 He still may faithful prove to worth like thine.
 Consult with Theseus : he can best advise you.

Ari. Consult with Theseus ! ask his kind consent,
 That I may prove a traitress to my vows !
 Resign my Theseus !

*With ev'ry grace, with ev'ry laurel crown'd,
 The lover's softness, and the warrior's fire.——*

Sir, for this counsel, for this gen'rous care,
 Accept my thanks.——“ You are too much alarm'd——
 “ Resign my Theseus !——Oh, the gods have form'd him
 “ With ev'ry virtue that adorns the hero !
 “ With valour, to incite the foldier's wonder ;
 “ With ev'ry grace to charm the heart of woman.

" Oh ! none will rival him. 'Twill be the pride
" Of Periander, 'tis his highest glory,
" That Theseus fled for shelter to his throne,
" And met protection here."

Perit. I've been to blame.

Perhaps I urge too far :—Princess, farewell !

May the benignant gods watch all your ways.

[*Exit.*

Ari. Your fears are vain ; each gloomy cloud shall vanish,

Or, ting'd with orient beams of smiling fortune,

With added lustre gild our various day ;

While o'er our heads Hymen shall wave his torch,

Sooth all our cares, and brighten every joy.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III. SCENE I.*Enter ARIADNE and THESEUS.**Ariadne.*

OH, look not thus! "those eyes that glare so pale,"
 Those sighs that heave as they would burst your heart,
 Affright my soul, and kill me with despair.
 Oh! banish all thy doubts; and let those eyes
 Smile, as when first they beam'd their softness on me.

"*The.* Alas! I'm doom'd to mourn; my thread of life
 "Was steep'd in tears, and must for ever run
 "Black and discolour'd with the worst of woes.

"*Ari.* Can thy great heart thus shrink, appall'd with fear?
 "Theseus, I never saw thee thus before."

"*The.* Our days of rapture and of promis'd joy
 Far hence are fled.

"*Ari.* No, on their rosy wings
 "The hours of joy and ever new delight
 "Come smiling on. Is this a time for fear,
 "When all is gay serenity around us,
 "And fortune opens all her brightest scenes?

"*The.* Too soon that scene, with low'ring clouds deform'd,
 "Will show the sad reverse." You little know

How Periander with resistless fury
 Breaks through all boynds. His passions scorn restraint:
 And what he wills, his vehemence of soul
 Pursues with fierce, with unremitting ardour.
 To his wild fury all must yield obedience.

"*Ari.* His reign has ever been both mild and just.
 Fair virtue, like some god that rules the storm,
 Still calms the warring elements within him;
 And moderation with her golden curb
 Guides all his actions.

"*The.* Yet there is an impulse,
 Which with the whirlwind's unresisted rage,
 Roots up each virtue, and lays waste the soul.
 Love reigns a lawless tyrant in his heart.
 For thee he sighs; and sure that matchless beauty
 May well inflame the passions of a prince,

Who with a diadem can deck thy brow.

Ari. Too well he knows the ties that bind us both.
Knows you're all truth, all constancy and love.
He knows the flame my virgin sighs have own'd;
Knows that for thee I left my native land,
Fled from my friends, and from my father's palace,
And gave up all for thee. And thinks he now
His throne, his diadem, his purple pomp,
Have charms of power to lure me from thy arms?
He knows his vows are lost in air: Thy heart
Is Ariadne's throne.

The. "His fiercest passions
"Break forth at once, like the deep cavern'd fire.
"All ties, all tender motives must give way.
His resolution's fix'd." Alas! this very day,
Unless for ever I renounce thy love,
His jealous rage sends me hence bound in chains,
To die a victim on the Cretan shore.

Ari. He will not dare it; no, so black an outrage
His heart will ne'er conceive. Should he persist,
Should malice goad him on. I too can fly
This barb'rous shore; with unextinguish'd love
Through every region, every clime attend thee;
Follow your fortunes, if the fates ordain,
Ev'n to my father's court; there prostrate fall,
And clasp his hand, and bathe it with my tears,
Nor cease with vehemence of grief to melt him,
Till he release thee to these circling arms,
"Approve my choice, and show thee to the people,
"The adopted heir, the rising sun of Crete."

The. By yielding me, his rival is destroy'd;
And by that act his proud ambition hopes
To sooth your father's irritated pride,
And mould him to his wish.

Ari. Can Periander
Harbour that black intent? "and does he mean
"To prove at first a villain and a murderer,
"And then aspire to Ariadne's love?"
No, Theseus, no; he will not stoop so vilely:
I've heard you oft' commend him; oft' my sister
Employs whole hours with rapture in his praise.
He is her constant theme. Her partial voice
Ev'n above thine exalts his fav'rite name.
"She dwells on each particular; in peace

" His milder virtues, his great fame in arms :
 " How, when he talks, fond admiration listens :
 " And each bright princess hears him, and adores.
 " *The.* Not envy's self, howe'er his pride inflam'd
 " May deal with me, can overshade his glory.
 " Renown in war is his ; the softer virtues
 " Of mild humanity adorn his name.
 " The polish'd arts of peace, and every muse
 " Attune to finer sentiments his soul.
 " His throne is fix'd upon the firmest basis
 " Of wisdom, and of justice. There to shine
 " The partner of his heart, his soft associate
 " In that bright scene of glory, well may prompt
 " In ev'ry neighbouring state the virgin's sigh,
 " And wake the ambition of each monarch's daughter.
 " *Alc.* The strain, the rapture that to me in secret
 " My sister Phædra pours the live-long day,
 " Enamour'd of his name ! Perchance you've heard her,
 " And mark'd the heaving sigh, and seen the blush
 " That glow'd with conscious crimson on her cheek."
 Oh ! if she cherishes the tender flame,
 " With maiden coyness veil'd, and pines in love,"
 Beauty like her's may fire a monarch's heart,
 And Periander, without shame or guilt,
 Without a crime, may woe her to his arms.
 To see her happy, to behold my Phædra
 Crown'd with a monarch's and a people's love,
 Would be the pride of Ariadne's heart.

The. Oh, it were misery, the worst of woes.

[*Aside.*

Ari. Why do you start ? why that averted look ?
 If you approve their nuptials, freely tell me :
 With Periander I can plead her cause,
 Paint forth each charm of that accomplish'd mind,
 " 'Till the king glow with rapture at the sound."

The. Oh, this would plunge me in the worst despair !
 It must not be !—Has not Perithous told you—

[*Aside.*

Ari. Perithous is your friend.—Perhaps to draw
 The tie still closer, you would see him blest'd
 In Phædra's arms.—Tell me your inmost thoughts.
 If such your will, what will I not attempt
 To sooth to dear delight a mind like thine ?
 Phædra will listen to me ; mutual love
 Has so endear'd us, from our tend'rest years
 " Has so encreas'd, and with our growth kept pace,"

That we have had one wish, one heart, one mind.—
My voice with Phædra will have all the power
Of soft persuasion : her exalted merit
Will bless your friend and brighten all his days.

The. Oh, the bare image fires my brain to madness ! [*Aside.*
Alas ! this dream of happiness——

Ari. What means
That sudden cloud ? and why that lab'ring sigh ?
Oh, let my sister to Perithous' vows
Yield her consent, and bless him with her beauty :
Together then we'll seek the realms of Greece ;
There in sweet union see our growing loves
Spring with new rapture, share each other's bliss,
And by imparting multiply our joys.

Enter ARCHON.

Arc. With thee, fair princess, Periander craves
Another interview : He enters now
The palace garden.

Ari. Does he there require
My presence ?

Arc. Where you deign to give him audience,
He will attend you.

The. " It were best go forth."
His virtues claim respect ; and Oh, remember
My fate, my happiness on thee depend.

Ari. Trust Ariadne, trust your fate with me. [*Aside.*

Arc. The Cretan princess, with resistless passion
Inflames his fierce desires. My boding fears
Foresee some dire event.

The. A glance from her
Will sooth his rage, and all may still be well.
When love resistless fires the noble mind,
Th' effects, though sudden, from that gen'rous source,
Are oft' excus'd ; the errors of our nature,
The tender weakness of the human heart.

Arc. Errors that influence the public weal,
His rank prohibits.—" Let his vices be
" (If vices he must have) obscure and private,
" Unfelt by men, leaving no trace behind.
" It were unjust, that his unbounded fury
" Should tear thee from the arms of her you love."

The. " But when a monarch"—Ha ! Perithous comes.

Enter PERITHOUS.

Perit. Theseus, I fought thee.—Archon, does your king
Relent? or must confed'rate Greece send forth
Her fleets and armies to support her rights?

Arc. The miseries of war my feeble voice
Shall labour to prevent. Theseus, farewell.
Archon is still your friend. With Ariadne,
Ere long, I trust, you may revisit Greece.

[*Exit.*

The. With her revisit Greece! Why all this zeal
For Ariadne? Who has tamper'd with him?
Why not convey her to her father's court?
Why not invite her to the throne of Naxos?
Why all this busy, this officious care
To torture me? to foil his sovereign's love?
To send far hence the idol of his heart,
And blend her fate with mine?

Perit. Her fate with thine
So close is blended, nothing can divide them.
Truth, honour, justice, gratitude combine
Each tender sentiment; they form a chain,
An adamant chain, indissoluble, firm,
And strong as that which from the throne of Jove
Hangs down to draw to harmony and union
This universal frame.

The. Is this my friend?

Perit. Your friend, who scorns to flatter;
Who dares avow th' emotions of his heart.
Oh! Theseus, we have long together walked
The paths of virtue, upright, firm in honour;
And shall we now decline? and shall we now
With fraud, with perfidy, with blackest perfidy,
For ever damn our names?

The. This stern reproof

“Is not the language the time now demands.
“’Tis thine, my friend, to soften my distress;
“To pour the balm of comfort o’er my sorrows,
“And soothe the anguish of a wounded mind.
“Oh! step between me and the keen reproaches
“Of injur’d beauty; save me from myself;
“From Ariadne save me!

“*Perit.* Is it thus,
“Oh! rash deluded man!” and is it thus
With high disdain you spurn that rarest beauty,
That fond, believing, unsuspecting fair?

The. Have you not painted to her dazzled fancy
The splendor of a throne, that here awaits her?

Perit. So generous, so unbounded is her love,
She seeks but thee, thee only. Pomp and splendor
Are toys that sink, and fade away before her.

The. Then tell her all the truth: tell her at once,
Another flame is kindled in my heart,
And fate ordains she never can be mine.

Perit. Will that become Perithous? that the task
Thy friendship would impose? Must I proclaim
To th' astonished world, my friend's dishonour?
Must I with cruelty, with felon purpose,
Approach that excellence, that beauteous form,
And for her gen'rous love, for all her virtue,
Fix in her tender breast the sharpest pang,
With which ingratitude can stab the heart?"

The. Why wilt thou goad me thus? 'tis cruelty;
'Tis malice in disguise.—Forbear, forbear;
Assist your friend in the soft cause of love,
Involuntary love, that hold's enslaved
The fetter'd will.

Perit. Involuntary love!
Beware, beware of the deceitful garb
That vice too oft' assumes.—There's not a purpose
Prompting to evil deeds, that dares appear
In it's own native form. The first approach,
With bland allurements, with insidious mien,
Wears the delusive 'semblance of some virtue.
The Siren spreads her charms, and fancy lends
Her thousand hues to deck the lurking crime.
Opinion changes; 'tis no longer guilt;
'Tis amiable weakness, generous frailty,
Involuntary error. On we rush
By fatal error led, and thus the language,
The sophistry of vice deludes us all.

The. Perithous, 'tis in vain: in vain you strive,
By subtle maxims, and by pedant reasoning
To talk down love, and mould it to your will.
It rages here like a close pent-up fire;
And think'st thou tame advice can check it's course,
And soothe to rest the fever of the soul?

Perit. And wilt thou thus, by one ungen'rous deed,
Blast all thy laurels, and give up at once
To shame and infamy thy honour'd name?

The. Woul'dst thou destroy my peace of mind for ever?

Perit. I would preserve it. Would'st thou still enjoy
 Th' attesting suffrage of the conscions heart ?
 The road is plain and level : live with honour.
 Be all your deeds, such as become a man :
 'Tis that alone can give th' unclouded spirit,
 The pure serenity of inward peace..
 All else is noisy fame ; the giddy shout
 Of gazing multitudes, that soon expires,
 And leaves our laurels, and our martial glory
 To wither and decay. By after times
 The roar of fond applause no more is heard.
 The triumph ceases, and the hero then
 Fades to the eye : the faithless man remains.

The. Was it for this you spread your sails from Greece ?
 To aggravate my sorrows ?—If a monarch
 Woes Ariadne to his throne and bed ;
 If I resign her to imperial splendor,
 Where is my guilt ? Why will she not accept
 The bright reward, that waits to crown her virtues ?

Perit. Because, like thee, she is not prone to change.

The. Why, cruel, why thus pierce my very soul ?

Perit. Because, like thee, she knows not to betray.

The. Disastrous fate ! And would'st thou have me fly
 From Phædra's arms ? By every solemn vow,
 By every sacred tie, by love itself,
 My heart is her's. She is my only source
 Of present bliss, my best, my only earnest
 Of future joy ; the idol of my soul.
 Should I desert her, can invention find,
 'Midst all her stores, a tint of specious colouring
 To varnish the deceit ?

Perit. It wants no varnish,
 No specious colouring. Plain honest truth
 Will justify the deed. With open firmness
 Go, talk with Phædra : tell her with remorse
 Conscience has shown the horrors of your guilt.
 Tell her the vows, you breathe to Ariadne,
 Were heard above, recorded by the gods.
 Tell her if still she spreads her fatal lure,
 She takes a perjur'd traitor to her arms,
 Practis'd in fraud, who may again deceive.
 Tell her, with equal guilt, nor less abhor'd,
 She joins to rob a sister of her rights.
 Tell her that Greece——

The. No more ; I'll here no more.

Assist my love ; 'tis there I ask your aid.

Forget my fame ; it is not worth my care.

Perit. Then, go, rush on, devoted to destruction.

Let Hymen kindle his unhallow'd torch,

Clasp'd in each other arms enjoy your guilt.

Renounce all sacred honour ; add your name

To the bright list of those illustrious worthies,

Who have seduc'd, by vile insidious arts,

The fond affections of the gen'rous fair ;

And in return for all her wondrous goodness,

Leave the fair mourner to deplore her fate ;

To pine in solitude, and die at length

Of the slow pangs that rend the broken heart.

The. Oh ! fortune, fortune !—wherefore was I born

With a great heart, that loves, that honours virtue,

And yet thus fated to be passion's slave ?

Perit. 'Tis but one effort, and you tower above

The little frailties that debase your nature.

That were true victory, worth all your conquests.

Your triumph o'er yourself. And lo ! behold

The occasion offers.—Ariadne comes !

The. I must not see her now.

Perit. By heaven, you shall !

The. Off, loose your hold. Confusion, shame, and horror,

Rage and despair, distract and rend my soul.

'Tis you have fixed these scorpions in my breast.

Perit. And yet——

[holding him.

The. No more ; let midnight darkness hide me.

In some deep cave, where I may dwell with madness,

Far from the world, far from a friend like thee.

[Exit.

Perit. Misguided man ! my friendship still shall save him.

Ari. Stay, Theseus, stay : does he avoid my presence ?

Why with that haste, that wild disorder'd look——

Perit. 'Tis now the moment of suspended fate :

The gods assembled hold th' uplifted balance,,

And my friend's peace, all that is dear, or sacred,

His fame and honour,——

Ari. The gods protect him still : you need not fear.

All danger flies before him.

Perit. While the king

Detains him here, he knows to what excess

A monarch's love——

Ari. Does that alarm his fear ?

And does he therefore fly ?—Ungen'rous Theseus !

And is it thus you judge of Ariadne ?

And yet, Perithous, I will not upbraid him.
His tender sensibility of heart
Too quickly takes th' alarm : yet that alarm
Shows with what strong solicitude he loves ;
My tears prevail, and he may sail for Greece.
This very moment Periander granted——
See, where he comes : he will confirm it all.

Perit. It were not fit he should behold me here.
When apt occasion serves, we'll meet again.
A heart like your's, with every virtue fraught,
Should be no more deceiv'd. I now withdraw.

[Exit.

Ari. Go tell my Theseus all his fears are vain.
In love, as well as war, he still must triumph.

Perian. If once again I trouble your retreat,
Deem me not, princess, too importunate,
Nor with indignant scorn reject a heart,
That throbs in every vein for you alone.

Ari. Scorn in your presence, sir, no mind can feel.
Far other sentiments your martial glory,
And the mild feelings of your gen'rous nature,
Excite in every breast. The crown you wear,
From virtue's purest ray derives it's lustre.
Your subjects own a father in their king.
" Beneath your sway the wretched ever find
" A sure retreat. At Periander's court
" All hearts rejoice : here mis'ry dries her tear."
To me your kind humanity has given
It's best protection. " For the gen'rous act
" My heart o'erflows : these tears attest my thanks."
Each day beholds me bow to you with praise,
Respect, and gratitude.

Perian. And must respect,
Fruitless respect, and distant cold regard,
Be all my lot? Has Heaven no other bliss
In store for me? unhappy royalty!
Condemn'd to shine in solitary state,
With no fond tenderness of mutual love,
To sooth the heart, and sweeten all it's cares
" Without the soft society of love."

Ari. For thee the gods reserve sublimer joys,
" The happiness supreme of serving millions."
'Tis your's, in war to guard a people's rights ;
In peace, to spread one common bliss to all,
And feel the raptures of that best ambition.
" Mankind demands you : glory is your call."

Perian, Ambition is the phrenzy of the soul;
 The fierce insatiate avarice of glory,
 That wades through blood, and marks it's way with ruin:
 And when it's toils are o'er, what then remains,
 But to look back through wide dispeopled realms?
 Where nature mourns o'er all the dreary waste,
 And hears the widows', and the orphans' shrieks,
 And sees each laurel wither at the groans,
 And the deep curses of a ruin'd people.
 Vain efforts all! vain the pursuit of glory,
 Unless bright beauty arm us for the field,
 Hail our return, enhance the victor's prize,
 And love reward what love itself inspir'd.

" Ari. The vast renown, that spread such lustre round you,
 " Like the bright sun, that dims all meaner rays,
 " And makes a desert in the blue expanse,
 " Will never want uplifted wondering eyes,
 " To gaze upon it." From the neighb'ring states
 Some blooming virgin, some illustrious prince
 Will yield with rapture to a monarch's love,
 Proud of a throne, which virtue has adorn'd.

Perian. That pew'r is your's: one kind indulgent glance,
 One smile, the harbinger of soft consent,
 Has bliss in store beyond the reach of fortune,
 Beyond ambition's wish.

Ari. Your pardon, sir,
 I must not hear you sigh, and sigh in vain:
 Look round your isle, where in it's fairest forms,
 In all it's winning graces, beauty decks
 Your splendid court. Amidst the radiant train,
 If none has touch'd your heart, may I presume—
 Perhaps you'll think mine a too partial voice—
 If none attract you, see where Phædra shines
 In every grace, in each attractive charm
 Of outward form, and dignity of mind.
 Her rare perfections, her unequall'd virtue,
 " The mild affections of her gen'rous heart,"
 Her friendship firm, in ev'ry instance tried,
 Transcend all praise. " In her pure virgin breast
 " Love never kindled yet his secret flame.
 " Your voice may wake desires unfelt before:"
 With pride she'll listen, and may crown your vows
 With all th' endearments of a love sincere,
 And with her softer lustre grace your throne.

Perian. Why, cruel, torture me with cold disdain?
 With thee to reign were Perian's glory.

Ari. Oh, not for me that glory! well you know
This heart already is another's right.

Perian. There lies the precipice on which you tread.
By your own hand 'tis cover'd o'er with flow'rs:
Your fall will first discover it.

Ari. Those words
Dark and mysterious——

“*Perian.* It were not fit
“That fond credulity should lead you on,
“In gay delusion, and in errors maze.”——
The base deceiver——

Ari. Who?—what dost thou mean?

“*Perian.* I mean to save you from his treach'rous arts;
“To place you on a throne, beyond his reach,
“Where foul ingratitude will see her shafts
“Fall pow'rless at your feet.

“*Ari.* Cold tremors shoot,——
“I know not why,—through all my trembling frame.”——
Perian. Tender, sincere, and generous yourself,
You little know the arts of faithless man.

Ari. Explain; unfold;—you freeze my soul with horror.

Perian. Beware of Theseus!

Ari. How! of Theseus, saidst thou?

Perian. Were I this day to send him hence a victim,
(And you alone—your tears suspend my purpose)
’Twere vengeance due to perfidy like his.

Ari. The viper-tongue of slander wrongs him, Sir.
Too well I know his worth:—my heart's at peace.

Perian. With fond enchantment the gay firen hope
Has lur'd you, on a calm unruffled sea,
To trust a smiling sky and flutt'ring gales.
Too soon you'll see that sky deform'd with clouds;
Too soon you'll wonder at the gath'ring storm,
And look aghast at the deep lurking ruin,
Where all your hopes must perish.

Ari. Still each word
Is wrapt in darkness:—end this dread suspense,
Or else my flutt'ring soul will soon forsake me,
And leave me at your feet a breathless corse.

Perian. A former flame—restrain that wild surprise;
Summon your strength:—I speak his very words:
A former flame, kindled long since in Greece,
“Preys on his heart with slow consuming fires.”

Ari. Does this become a monarch? Can your pride
Thus lowly stoop, thus with a tale suborn'd
To tempt the honour of this faithful breast?

Perian. By ev'ry pow'r that views the heart of man,
And dictates moral thoughts, 'tis truth I utter.
Last night, admitted to a private audience,
He own'd it all; renounc'd your love for ever;
Gave up his fair pretensions.—Ariadne,
Your colour changes, and the gushing tear
Starts from your trembling eye.—

Ari. The very thought——
Though sure it cannot be,—the very thought
Strikes to my heart like the cold hand of death.

Perian. If still you doubt, go charge him with his guilt:
He will allow it all.

Ari. And if he does,
Oh, what a change in one disastrous day!

Perian. Your fate now calls for firm decisive measures.
I will no longer urge th' ungrateful subject.
I leave you to collect your flutt'ring spirits.
I would not see your gen'rous heart deceived—
His guilt should rouse your noblest indignation.
Now you may prove the greatness of your soul.

[Exit.

Ari. "If this be so,—if Theseus can be false,
"Is there on earth a wretch so curs'd as I am?"—
A former flame!—ha! think no more—that thought,
With ruin big, shoots horror to my brain.
A former flame "still rages in his soul.—
"So said the king."—Who is the fatal fair?
"Where, in what region does she hide her charms?"
Was it for her I sav'd him from destruction?
For her rebell'd against my father's power?
To give to her all that my heart adores?
Can Theseus thus!—no, "yonder sun will sooner
"Start from his orbit."—Yet wherefore shun my presence?
Why all this day that stern, averted look?
I'm torn, distracted, tortur'd with these doubts;
And where, Oh, where to fix!—I think him still
All truth, all honour, tenderness and love.
And yet Perithous—it is all too plain;
All things conspire; all things inform against him.
"He will avow it!"—Let me seek him straight,
Unload my breast, and charge him with my wrongs;
With indignation harrow up his soul;
Tell all I've heard, all that distracts my brain;
Pour forth my rage, pour forth my fondness too,
And perhaps prove him innocent at last.

ACT IV. SCENE I.*Enter ARIADNE.**Ariadne.*

"WHERE, Ariadne, where are now the hours
 "That, wing'd with rapture, chas'd each other's flight,
 "In one gay round of joy?—Where now the hopes,
 "That promis'd years of unextinguish'd love?"—
 "'Tis past;—the dream is fled;—the sun grows dim;
 "Fair day-light turns to darkness;—all within me
 Is desolation, horror, and despair.——
 And are his vows, breath'd in the face of heav'n,
 "Are all his oaths at once dispers'd in air?"
 Those eyes, whose glance sent forth the melting soul,
 Were they too false?—"The tears, with which he oft
 "Bedew'd his bosom, were they taught to feign?
 "He shuns me still: where does he lurk conceal'd?"—
 In all our haunts, in each frequented grove,
 (Ah! groves too conscious of the traitor's vows!)
 In vain I've sought him.—Does this hated rival,
 Has she seduc'd him to her am'rous parley?
 Gods! does she see him smile, and hear that voice?
 And does he sigh, and languish at her feet,
 Enamour'd gaze, and twine those arms around her?
 "Hold, traitor, hold; the gods forbid your love:—
 "Those looks, those smiles are mine!—Deluded maid!
 "Mine are those vows, that fond embrace is mine."
 Horror! distraction!—Still 'tis but surmise
 That with these shadowings makes me tremble thus.
 I still may wrong him:—Periander's fraud——
 "Tis he abuses my too credulous ear.
 "The tale may be suborn'd:—I'll not believe it.—
 "Lost Ariadne! you believe too much.
 "Where, where is Phædra? her unwearied friendship
 "May still avert my ruin: she may find
 "The barbarous man, and melt his heart to pity.
 "And yet she comes not."—Ha! Perithous here!
 He knows the worst:—he can pronounce my doom.

Enter PERITHOUS.

Perit. Forgive me, princess, with officious zeal
If I one more intrude. The time no longer
Admits of wav'ring, hesitating doubt.
The king, enfetted in the chains of love,
Reject the claims of Greece. If hence you part,
You must, with Theseus, steer your course for Crete.
His resolution's fix'd.

Ari. Does Theseus know
Th' impending danger?—have you seen your friend?

Perit. His great heart labours with a war of passions
Too big for utterance. In the soldier's eye
The silent tear stood trembling. Strong emotions
Convuls'd his frame. He knows your ev'ry virtue,
And rails in grief, in bitterness of soul,
At his hard fate, and each malignant planet,
That leaves him empty praise, and fruitless thanks,
The only sad return he now can make.

Ari. Thanks! unavailing thanks!—You need not come
To add to misery this sharpest pang.
Love in this breast is not a vulgar flame,
The mere compliance of a will resign'd;
'Tis gen'rous ecstacy, 'tis boundless ardour.
A heart, that feels like mine, will not be paid
With cold acknowledgments, and fruitless thanks;
Mere gratitude is perfidy in love.

Perit. Your bright perfections were his fav'rite theme
"He sees your days, that shone serenely bright,
"Discolour'd now with sorrows not your own.
"He sees you following, with unwearied steps,
"One on whom fortune has not yet exhausted
"Her stores of malice;—whom the gods abandon."

Ari. Whom justice, truth, and honour all abandon!"

Perit. It grieves him, Ariadne, much it grieves him,
To see thee overwhelm'd in his misfortunes:
Condemn'd with him to drain the bitter cup
Of endless woe; and since propitious fortune
With better omens courts you here at Naxos,
'Tis now his wish, that you renounce for ever
A man accurst, sad outcast from his country,
The fatal cause of all your sorrow, past.

Ari. The fatal cause of all my woes to come!

"*Perit.* I do not mean to justify his guilt.
 "Might I advise you, you may still be happy."
 A monarch lays his sceptre at your feet.
 Your father Minos will approve your choice;
 All Naxos will consent; a willing people
 With fond acclaim will hail you as their queen,
 And Theseus never can betray you more.

Ari. And dost thou think, say, does the traitor think
 Thus to ensnare me with insidious counsels?
 Last night admitted to a private audience,
 To Periander he confess'd his guilt.
 Another passion rages in his heart.
 You know it all: unfold your lurking thoughts,
 Reveal the truth; give me the tale of horror,
 Own the black treason, and consummate all.

"*Perit.* Would I could hide the failings of my friend. [*Aside.*]

"*Ari.* Those broken accents but distract me more.

"Let ruin come; I am prepar'd to meet it.—

"Oh, speak! pronounce my doom!—In me you see

"A wretched princess, a deluded maid,—

"Lost to her friends, her country, and her father.—

"In pity tell me all: with gen'rous frankness

"Deal with the wretched: let me know the worst."

Perit. Far be deceit from me; of just resentment
 I would light up the flame: my friend is plung'd,
 Beyond all depth, in treachery and guilt.
 Another love shoots poison to his soul.
 At length he owns it. He avows his passion.

Ari. Avows his passion!

"*Perit.* 'Tis his fatal crime.

"*Ari.* You hear it, gods!—I ask no patience of you:

"Lend me no fortitude, no strength to bear

"This horrible deception."—If your justice, gods,

From your bright mansions views this scene of guilt,

Why sleeps thy thunder?—"Send me instant madness,

"To raze at once all traces from my brain,

"All recollection of a world like this.

"All busy memory of ungrateful man."

Perit. Assert yourself; revenge your injur'd rights,
 And tow'r above the false, the base deserter,
 Who breaks all vows, and triumphs in his guilt.

Ari. Can fraud like this engender in his heart?

It cannot be; no,—the earth does not groan
 With such a monster!—You traduce him, sir.

Who form'd the black design? Who forg'd the tale?—

'Tis Periander's art:—'twas he suborn'd you.

Perit. If you will hear me——

Pri. Trouble me no more:

Theseus shall hear how his friend blasts his fame,
And comes from Athens with his high commission,
To tempt my faith, and work a woman's ruin.

[*Exit.*

Perit. Too generous prince! my heart inward bleeds
To see the cruel destiny that waits thee.

"Ruin, inevitable ruin falls.

"On her, on Theseus, and his blasted fame."

And yet if Phædra—would some gracious pow'r

Inspire my voice, and give the energy

To wake, to melt, to penetrate the heart.—

What if I seek her?—Ha!——

Enter PHÆDRA.

Phæ. Methought the sound
Of Ariadne's voice——

Perit. 'Tis as I wish'd:

Her timely presence——

[*Aside.*

Phæ. Went my sister hence?

Perit. Yes, hence she went, wild as the tempest's rage,
As if a conflagration of the soul

To madness fir'd her brain. But, Oh! I fear

She went to brood in secret o'er her wrongs;

To think, and to be deeper plung'd in woe.

Phæ. You chill my heart with fear: you have not told her

For whom in secret Theseus breathes his vows;

For whom he cherishes the hidden flame.

Perit. There wants but that—that circumstance of horror,
To desolate her soul with instant madness.

Phæ. Yet why still obstinate, why thus didst in

A monarch's vows? A mind like hers, elate

With native dignity, and fierce with pride,

May view with scorn the lover who betrays her,

And on th' imperial throne revenge her wrongs.

Perit. Revenge is the delight of vulgar souls,
Unfit to rule the breast of Ariadne.

Phæ. Your words, your looks alarm me: from your eye
Why shoots that fiery glance?—What must we do?

Perit. What must we do?—The honest heart will tell thee:

"'Tis in your pow'r:—renounce your guilty loves;"

Do justice to a sister; scorn by fraud,
By treach'rous arts to undermine her peace;
Restore the lover whom you ravish'd from her,
A lover all her own, by ev'ry tie,
By solemn vows her own, nor join in guilt
To wrest him from her, for the selfish pride,
The little triumph o'er a sister's charms.

Phæ. To Ariadne turn: give her your counsel.—
She still, if timely wise, may save herself,
For joy and rapture:—she may live and reign.—
If I lose Theseus, I can only die.

Perit. Better to die, than live in vile dishonour.
You rush on sure destruction:—Awful conscience,
That sits in judgment in each human heart,
And, from that dread tribunal speaks within us—
Conscience will tell you, you have broke all faith,
Betray'd all confidence, destroy'd the bonds
Of sacred friendship, and with shame and infamy
Ruin'd a sister, who would die to serve you.

Phæ. Inhuman that thou art! why wound me thus
With stern reproach?—why arm against my peace,
With scorpion whips, these furies of the soul?

Perit. For this wilt thou invade a sister's rights?
For this betray her? to endure for ever
The self-accusing witness of the heart!
Remorse will be your portion: shame and anguish
Will haunt your nights, and render all your days
Unblest and comfortless.

Phæ. It is too much,
Too much to bear this agony of mind.

Perit. 'Tis virtue speaks; it warns you:—hear it's voice,
And, ere too deeply you are plung'd in guilt,
Return with honour, and regain the shore.

Phæ. No more;—'tis too much:—I cannot bear it.

Perit. Greece honours Ariadne:—Think when Theseus
Returns with glory stain'd, with foul dishonour,
Think of the black reversé. Will men receive
With songs of triumph, and with shouts of joy,
Him and his fugitive?—I see you're mov'd:—
Those tears are symptoms of returning virtue.

Phæ. You've turn'd my eyes with horror on myself.—
Oh! thou hast conquer'd:—Ariadne, take,
Take back your lover; I resign him to you.
No, Phædra will not live the slave of vice;

"I will not bear this torture of the mind,
 "Goaded by guilt, pale, trembling at itself."

Perit. There spoke the gen'rous soul :—to those emotions
 May the gods give the energy of virtue.

Phæ. Go, say to Theseus, for his love I thank him ;—
 Bid him renounce, forget me——Can he do it ?—
 Bid him preserve his honour, and his life.——
 You need not counsel him.—He will not fall
 A willing victim for a wretch like me.
 Yet, if his heart consents, let him forget
 His vows, his plighted faith ; and as he once,
 With unfelt ardour, could delude my sister,
 Bid him once more dissemble, and betray.

Perit. Oh, blest event ! All danger will retreat.——
 I leave you now, while nature stirs within you,
 I leave you to th' emotions of your heart.

[*Exit.*

Phæ. Oh, what a depth of sorrow and remorse,
 Of shame and infamy have I escap'd !——
 Just gods ! to you I bend : your warning voice
 Has taught me to renounce all guilty joys,
 And dwell, fair virtue !—dwell in peace with thee !

Enter THESEUS.

The. Phædra, what mean those tears ?—Upon the wing
 Of strong impatience I have sought your presence.——
 What new alarm——

Phæ. My soul is full of horror.——
 Renounce my love ;—forget me ;—think no more
 Of rashly plighted vows.

The. Renounce thee, Phædra !——

Phæ. Fly my disastrous love :—Disgrace and ruin
 Are all the portion Phædra has to give.

The. Is that my Phædra's voice ?—Can she talk thus ?
 The tyrant fair, who first inspir'd my heart
 With love unfelt before ?—I struggled long
 To stifle in my breast the hidden flame ;
 I fled your presence ;—wherefoe'er I fled
 Your image follow'd, and I still lov'd on.
 In vain I struggled : your discerning eye,
 What could escape ?—You fann'd the rising flame,
 And soon my fluttering heart was wholly thine.

Phæ. Call not to memory the fond delight.
 My guilt stands forth to view ; I own it all.

The. And were the graces of each winning smile
 Meant only to deceive me? Were those eyes
 Instructed how to roll the hidden glance,
 To fool me with a mockery of hope,
 Then spurn me from your arms a wretch despis'd?

Phæ. I must not, will not hear; the gods forbid it.—
 I see my sister pale, deform'd with murder,
 And hear the curses of mankind condemn me.—
 Your friend has told me all.

The. Perithous?

Phæ. He.

The. Is he too join'd? is he too leagu'd against me?

Phæ. It was his friendship spoke.

The. Then lead me hence,

A victim to appease your father's rage,
 To be a spectacle for public view,
 And meet at length an ignominious death.

Phæ. Heart-breaking sounds!

[*Aside.*

The. Or if, ungenerous fair,
 If you will have it so, command me hence,
 Once more to sigh at Ariadne's feet,
 And to that beauty——Phædra, have a care:—
 That lovely form the wond'ring eyes of men
 Adore, and even envy must admire.

Beauty like her's may twine about my heart,
 And gain, though much I've struggled to resist her,
 And gain at length my fond consent to wed her.

Phæ. Consent to wed her!—Death is in the thought!—
 Perfidious traitor!—practis'd in deceit!—
 And can another—after all your oaths—
 Oh, light inconstant man!—Ah! can a rival
 Blot out all fond remembrance of your love,
 And twine her fatal charms about your heart?—
 Consent to wed her!—Go,—abandon Phædra;
 Seek Ariadne; To her matchless beauty
 Breathe all your vows—those you can well dissemble;—
 Go, melt in tears—those too you well can feign;—
 Revel in joys your heart will never taste,
 And see me laid a victim at your feet!

The. Restrain this frantic rage, does this become
 The tender moment, when the faithful Theseus,
 With all a lover's ardour, comes to greet thee?

Phæ. The thought of losing thee turns wild my brain.
 Oh, love resumes his empire o'er my soul!

And all inferior motives yield at once.

These tears can witness——

The. 'Tis no time for tears.

Go seek your sister: your soft prayers and tears
May still prevail. If not, to-morrow's dawn,
Tell her, shall end her doubts, ere that, I've plann'd
Measures, that may make for our mutual bliss!

To Periander I must now repair.

His messengers have sought me. Oh, remember,
My life, my hope of bliss, must spring from thee.

[*Exit.*]

Phæ. And on his fate my happiness is grafted.

Ha! Ariadne comes!—Oh, love! what virtues

You force me to betray!—That haggard mien—

Those looks proclaim the tumult of her soul.

Enter ARIADNE.

Ari. [*Not perceiving Phæ.*] In vain I struggle to deceive my-
self:

I am betray'd, abandon'd, lost for ever.

"*Phæ.* How her fierce rage shoots lightning from her eyes!

[*Aside.*]

"*Ari.* Oh, while his accents charm'd my list'ning ear,

"While each fond look ensnat'd my captive heart;

"Ev'n then another lur'd the wanderer from me!

"Another's beauty taught those eyes to languish;

"Another's beauty tun'd his voice to love!

"*Phæ.* Appease her anger, gods, and grant her patience!

[*Aside.*]

Ari. And must I live to see her haughty triumph?

"To bear her scorn?—to bear the insulting pity

"Of Cretan dames!—all pleased with my undoing?"

To die at length in misery of heart,

And leave to after-times a theme of woe,

A tragic story for the bards of Greece?

Phæ. How my heart shrinks!—I dread the interview. [*Aside.*]

Ari. "Let lightning blast me first!"—Let whirlwinds scine
me,

"To atoms dash me on the craggy cliff,"

And blow me hence "upon the warring winds"

To climes unknown, beyond the verge of nature,

"To the remotest planet in the void;

"That never, never can approach this world;

"But rolling onward, farther, farther still

Of godlike clemency: 'twill then be yours
To show thee worthy of imperial sway,
To shelter still the man you once could love;
Know him insensible to worth like thine,
To honour lost, and yet forgive him all.

Ari. Must I transfer th' affections of my soul
To justify his perfidy? Must I
Bargain away my heart, to save a traitor?
For the fair Greek to save him? Mighty gods!
He shall not wed her!—Give her to my rage.—
I'll follow to the altar; there my vengeance—
How my heart shrinks—no, strike—"my blood recoils—"
"Assist me, Phœdra, give the means of death."
She shall not live to revel in his arms.
Then Theseus shall behold her faded form,
"And every drop the traitor then lets fall,"
Shall pay me for the tears, the galling tears,
His perfidy has cost me: then he'll know
The agony of soul, the mortal pang,
When we are robb'd of all the heart adores.

"*Phæ.* Ha! will you, sister, stain your hand in blood?"

"*Ari.* Then Theseus too—he clings about my heart;
"No, let him fall for Crete; my father's justice
"Will claim atonement for a daughter's wrongs,
"Doom him a sacrifice for broken vows,
"A dreadful warning to ungrateful man."

Enter PERITHOUS.

Perit. Your woes encrease each hour. A guard ev'n now
Leads Theseus forth, by Periander's order,
To yonder tower that overhangs the bay.
From hence, ere morn he must depart for Crete.

Phæ. Ah! there to perish—Ariadne haste,
Seek Periander;—fly—prevent the stroke,

Ari. "He can no more deceive me."

*Let the barbarian perish---no,
No more of tendernefs---the gen'rous deed
But gives to fell ingratitude the pow'r
With scorpion stings to pierce you to the heart.*

Phæ. Will you, then,
Ah, will you, cruel, see him doom'd to die?
I'll seek the king, and bathe his feet with tears,
And rave, and shriek, till he release him to me.

[*Exit.*

" *Perit.* If he must fall, 'tis you have fix'd his doom,
 " You still can save him. At one glance from you
 " The king will feel his resolution melt.

" *Ari.* I sav'd him once, and he requites me for it.
 " No more of tenderness. The gen'rous deed
 " But gives to fell ingratitude the pow'r
 " With scorpion stings to pierce you to the heart.

" *Perit.* Yet, Ariadne, think——

" *Ari.* No more, but leave me.

[*Exit Perit.*

" Yes, let the traitor die :— if he must die,
 " In some dark cave I can deplore his fate,
 " Hid from the world, forgetting all but him,
 " 'Till the kind hand of death shall lay me stretch'd,
 " In cold oblivion on the flinty ground,
 " Pale, wan, and senseless as the marble form
 " That lies in sorrow on some virgin's tomb !—
 " He will not see my tears : the barbarous man
 " Will be no more ungrateful.—Mighty gods !
 " I lov'd, I am betray'd—yet love him still.—
 " Quick let me hence :—one gen'rous effort more
 " May still—fond wishes, how you rush upon me !—
 " Should he relent,—Oh, should returning love
 " Once more—vain hope !—yet the delusion charms me :—
 " One gen'rous effort more may make him mine." [*Exit.*

ACT V. SCENE I.*Enter ALETES, followed by an OFFICER.**Aletes.*

JUSTICE prevails, and Theseus is my prisoner;
 Yon' tow'r immures him close. Seek thou the harbour,
 Unmoor the ship; let all things be prepar'd
 To give the spreading canvass to the wind.
 The day declines, and the moon's silver beam
 Plays on the trembling wave. This night 'tis fixed
 Theseus with me shall seek the Cretan shore. *[Exit Officer.]*

*Enter ARIADNE.**Ari.* Where is your prisoner?*Al.* In yon' tow'r secur'd.

Ari. Your policy has fail'd; release him straight:
 'Tis the king's order; you may read 't, sir. *[Gives him a Paper.]*

Al. Your interest has prevail'd, and I obey. *[Exit.]*

Ari. Ye fond ideas, ye fierce warring passions,
 With what a mingled sway you drive me on!
 Grief, rage, and indignation rise by turns;
 But love flows in, and resolution dies.
 Ha! see he comes—Oh! how this flutt'ring tumult,
 With hopes and fears alternate, shakes my frame.

Enter THESEUS.

Ari. *[viewing him as he advances]* Dissimulation fails him, and
 his looks

No longer hide the characters of guilt.

The. How shall I pour my thanks? a thousand sentiments
 All press at once, and yet deny me utterance.
 Words are too poor: expression strives in vain.

Ari. You need no more dissemble—sir, I've heard "Periander
 "Has heard the purpose of your soul. Last night,
 "When sleep seal'd ev'ry eye, in darkness wrapt,
 "Thro' secret ways, clandestine as your thoughts,
 "You stole into his presence; there disclos'd"
 Your hidden flame, your alienated heart.——*[turns from him.]*

The. Spare your reproaches, princess ; Oh ! forbear,
 Forbear in pity to afflict a mind
 Too deeply wounded ! that feels all it's errors,
 Feels all your virtues, and with keenest sense
 Aches at it's own reflections.

Ari. Of the pardon
 Which Periander to my pray'rs has granted,
 You know not the extent. To-morrow's sun
 Shall light you to your nuptials ; you may then
 Shew to the world this unapparent beauty,
 And give to her the vows that once were mine.

The. Oh ! Ariadne, spare this keen reproof !
 Could you but know the pangs that struggle here—

Ari. “ Theseus, you weep ! you weep o'er my afflictions ;
 “ You feel my wrongs, yet barb'rous ev'n in pity,
 “ You fix the shaft of anguish in my heart !

The. “ On me, on me the weight of ruin falls ;
 “ 'Tis I am plung'd in woe ; a man condemn'd,
 “ To wander o'er the world.” Alas, 'tis fate,
 Fate drives me on. If you forget a wretch,
 The prey of grief, the sport of fortune's malice :
 And if a monarch, to reward your virtues,
 Prepares th' imperial wreath to deck your brow—

Ari. Is that the recompence I wish'd to gain ?
 “ Too well you know this heart. Had Periander
 “ A wider empire than e'er monarch rul'd,
 “ And you were helpless ; destitute of fortune,
 “ I had been, heav'n can witness ! happy with you.
 “ In loving you, I sought yourself alone,

The. “ For all this waste of generous affection,
 “ Calamity is all that Theseus brings.

Ari. Come lead me hence to some far distant wild,
 Where human footstep never prints a trace ?

There blest'd with thee I could for ever dwell,
 “ Thron'd in thy heart, the mistress of thy love.

“ *The.* Here happiness awaits you ; here you're destin'd,

“ The mild vicegerent of the gods on earth.

“ In that bright sphere while you serenely shine,

“ The pattern of all virtue, temp'ring justice

“ With mercy, and diffusing blessings round you,

“ With tears of joy mankind will own your sway.

Ari. Oh, vile ingrate !

“ *The.* If you will deign to hear me :

“ Though great my crimes—

Ari. Thou traitor!—was it thus
 “ You look’d and talk’d, when first I saw and lov’d ?
 “ Your doom was fix’d; the officers of vengeance
 “ Remorseless led you forth; my trembling eye
 “ Pursued your steps; tears gush’d; I could not speak.
 “ I fled to your relief, and my undoing :
 “ Then ev’ry god was witness to your vows :
 “ The fond delusion charm’d me. I rebell’d
 “ Against my father; I betray’d his honour;
 “ And all for thee. I fled my native land.
 “ Nor winds, nor waves, nor exile could debar me.
 “ This the return!—have I deserv’d it of you ?
 “ Tell me my crime; and, oh ! if possible
 “ Teach me to think ’tis justice that I suffer;
 “ For ev’n in ruin I would not abhor thee.”

The. You wrong me much : By yon bright stars I swear,
 I never meant by base ingratitude
 To fix affliction in that bosom-softness.

Thy name, thy merit, and thy wondrous goodness,
 While life informs this frame, shall ever live
 Esteem’d and honour’d, treasur’d in my heart.

Ari. Esteem’d and honour’d!—’twas your love you promis’d.
 A monarch, saidst thou, woe me to his arms!—
 What truth, what fair return have I to give him?
 Give me, barbarian!—give me back my heart,
 The heart you robb’d me off :—Give back my vows,
 My artless vows, my pure unpledg’d affections,
 With equal warmth that I may meet his love;
 And not like thee, with treach’rous bland allurements,
 Courts his embrace, and charm him to betray.

The. Then if you will, wreak your worst vengeance on me.
 Ascend the throne; back to the Cretan shore
 Convey me hence to glut your father’s rage:
 I there can die content. Or if your mercy
 Permit me once again to visit Greece,
 Oft I shall hear of Ariadne’s name;
 Well pleas’d at distance, in the humble vale
 Of private life, or in the tented field,
 To view the radiant glory that furrounds you,
 And thank the gods for shedding blessings down
 On thee and all thy race.

Ari. Ay, visit Greece;
 Display to Athens all your brave exploits,
 Your battles won, the nations you have conquer’d.

And let your banners, waving high in air,
Hold forth the bright inscription to men's eyes,
'Lo, this is he who triumph'd o'er a woman.'
My death will blazon forth the fame of him,
Who freed the world from monsters of the desert,
Who slew the *minotaur*, but could not quell
Ingratitude, that monster of the soul.

The. You need not, Ariadne, Oh, you need not
Thus tear me piece-meal. My distracted heart
Feels in each nerve, and bleeds at every vein.

Ari. Unbidden tears, why will you fool me thus !
These tears that fall, that thus gush out perforce,
Are not the tears of supplicating love :—
They are the tears of burning indignation,
Of shame, and rage, and pride, and conscious virtue ;
Virtue that feels, feels at the very heart
Each itab inhuman treachery has given,
Yet sees that calm tranquillity in guilt.

*See me no more ; to-morrow spread your sails,
But take not, Sir, the partner of your heart ;—
No,—dare not, on thy life, convey her hence.
Go, sail for Athens,
Alone, heart-broken, comfortless ; like me
Plung'd in despair.
Farewell, for ever, Oh, ungrateful man ?*

Enter PHÆDRA,

Phæ. Once more restor'd to liberty and life.

[*To The.*

The. Oh, death were happiness to what I feel !

" *Ari.* See me no more ; to-morrow spread your sails.

" Take in your train the partner of your heart.—

" She shall not go :—once more I'll see the king,

" And dare not on thy life convey her hence.

" *Phæ.* What meddling fiend inflames you thus to madness ?

" Hear, Ariadne, hear.—

" *Ari.* Go, sail for Athens,

[*To The.*

" Alone, heart-broken, comfortless ; like me

" Plung'd in despair ; like me, depriv'd of all

" Your heart held dear.

" *Phæ.* Let me appease your wrath.

" *Ari.* I will descend to pray'rs and tears no more.

" Farewell for ever ; Oh, ungrateful man !

[*Exit.*

" *The.*" *Distracted !—madness !—Oh, she has destroy'd
My peace of mind for ever !*

Phæ. Theseus, no :—

My lenient care shall mitigate your grief.

The. For thee, my Phædra, I bear all for thee.—

Since liberty is mine, let me employ it

To serve our mutual bliss. The time admits

No dull delay. This moment I must leave thee.

Phæ. Ah!—whither do you go?

The. Observe me well.

That path that winds along the barren heath,

Leads to the mountain's ridge : there down the steep

A soft declivity will guide your steps

To Neptune's temple, shelter'd in the grove.

There I expect you.

Phæ. Wherefore?—what intent?—

Unfold the dark design ; my fears alarm me.

The. No more ;—the sun descends, and sable night

Draws o'er the face of things her dusky veil.

With cautious step proceed ; but, ere you go,

Watch Ariadne :—here beguile her stay,

If she pursues me, all is lost for ever.

Farewell, farewell, I trust my fate with thee.

[Exit]

Phæ. Oh, how my bosom pants with doubt and fear !

What may this mean ?—some dread event impends.

He will not---no---preserve him, gracious powers !

Let him not, prompted by despair, attempt

Beyond his strength, and rush on sure destruction.

Enter ARIADNE.

Ari. Where, Phædra, whither is the traitor fled ?

Phæ. Oh, you have been to blame !---with haggard eyes

Upturn'd to Heaven, he paus'd, and heav'd a sigh,

As if his lab'ring heart would burst his frame,

And leave him here, a pale, a breathless corpse,

At length with haste, with fury in his look,

But blessing still your name, he rush'd along,

And vanish'd from my sight.

Ari. The barb'rous man !

Did he deny his falsehood ? Did one tear

Speak his compunction ? Did he once relent ?

In guilt obdurate ! did you mark his mien,

The pride, the scorn that darted from his eye ?

Phæ. What choice was left him, when with fierce disdain

You spurn'd him from you ?

Ari. Therefore did he shun me?
 Ungen'rous man! he saw I lov'd him most,
 Then when enrag'd I pour'd my curses on him:
 My heartstrings even then were twin'd about him.
 Once more I'll see him: should he sail for Athens,
 'Tis fix'd to follow him. "He will not then
 "Dare to avow a treachery like this.
 "His glory is at stake: with one accord
 "All hearts declare for me. The sons of Greece,
 "For all my sorrows, all my sufferings past,
 "With to reward me in their hero's arms."

Phæ. And does Perithous join you? does he mean
 To waft you o'er the deep?

Ari. His ship already
 From last night's storm refitted, courts the breeze,
 And even now prepares to plough the deep.

Phæ. Theseus, the while, in pining discontent,
 Forlorn and wretched on the blasted heath,
 Sighs to the winds, and drinks his falling tears.

Ari. Oh, fly, pursue him! calm his troubled spirit!
 "Still, traitor as he is, he may relent.
 "For Oh, too well I know his godlike nature;
 "Know the mild virtues that adorn his mind,
 "And more than speak in each enchanting look."
 Go seek him, Phædra: tell him all my woes,
 And reconcile his heart to love and me.——
 But hark!—some step this way——

Phæ. Perithous comes.

"*Ari.* Haste—fly—pursue him—find the barbarous man."

"*Phæ.*" I leave you now.

Ari. Farewell.

Phæ. Where shall we meet?

Ari. In yonder palace.

Phæ. There you may expect me.

Ari. Oh, grant her power to touch, to melt his heart! (Exit.)

Enter PERITHOUS.

Perit. I bring you tidings may revive your hopes.—
 Theseus may still be thine.

Ari. May still be mine!

Perit. Yes:—Periander, should he still persist
 To hold you here a captive, sees his danger.
 Crete arms against him: Athens too will claim you,
 And let destruction loose. To cope with both,

Not even the soul of Periander dares.
 He must release you : then you sail for Greece.
 Theseus will there be yours : his solemn vow's,
 And the vast debt of gratitude he owes,
 Join'd by the public voice, will bind him to you.
Ari. But if constraint alone—Ah! can you think
 That his relenting heart will feel remorse?
Perit. The indignation of mankind will warn him.
 "Returning virtue then—"

"*Ari.* If aught can waken
 "A spark of love in that obdurate breast ;"
 A look, a sigh, impassion'd from the heart,
 Will heal my sorrows, and, with tears of joy,
 Make me forgive him all. I burn once more
 To wander with him o'er the roaring deep.—
 And has the king consented?

Perit. Ev'n now I left him
 In close debate, and onward to this spot
 Bending his eager step. With friendly counsels
 Archon attends, and seconds all I wish.
 Lo, where he comes this way. Retire a while :
 Yon' grove will give you shelter : there remain.
 A single glance from those persuasive eyes
 May once again inflame his fierce desires,
 And reason then will plead your cause in vain.

Ari. May all your words sink melting to his soul!

Perit. Now, gods, assist me! If I now succeed,
 My fears subside, and danger is no more.

[Exit.

Enter PERIANDER.

Perian. Perithous, hear : this hour ends all debate.
 My resolution's fix'd : then urge no more
 Your haughty claim : 'tis torture to my heart.

Perit. A heart like thine will generously love.
 You will not force the prince's to your arms,
 Nor light with Hymen's torch the flames of war.

Perian. Ha! dost thou deem me of so fierce a spirit,
 To tyrannize the fears of Ariadne?
 No,—her own lip, the music of that voice,
 To my delighted ear shall breathe the promise,
 The soft avowal of our mutual flame.

Perit. She doats on Theseus : the wide world has heard
 The story of her love. And can you hope
 To turn away the current of affection

From him, who first awak'd her young desires,
Still fans the flame, and lords it o'er her soul?

Perian. Let him depart : I have releas'd him to you.

Then Ariadne will resent her wrongs,
Incline her heart, and listen to my vows.

Bear your friend hence : my orders shall be issued.

For Ariadne trouble me no more.

[*Exit.*

Perit. Proud monarch, go ! This night shall mar your hopes :

This very night, while sleep lulls all your guards,

She shall embark. When lawless pow'r prevails,

The noble end must justify the means.

Enter ARIADNE.

Ari. Thou generous man ! hast thou regain'd my freedom ?

Perit. This very night we quit the hated shore.

Enquire no more : you must embark with me.——

For Theseus, he will gladly join our flight.

Ari. All things invite us : from the sky bursts forth

A stream of radiance, and the level main

Presents a wide expanse of quivering light:

Where is my sister ?

Perit. She must here remain.

Ari. No, it were perfidy, a breach of friendship.

She fled with me : our hearts were ever join'd

By the sweet ties of friendship and of love.

Perit. Here she must stay ; your happiness requires it.

Ari. What is her crime ? Ah, why should we desert her !

Perit. Seek not to know too much.

Ari. No, Phædra, no ;

I cannot leave thee here.

Enter ARCHON.

Arc. This very moment

A soldier from the harbour brings this letter.

To you it is address'd.

[*Gives a letter to Perit.*

Perit. And comes from Theseus.

Ari. From Theseus !—wherefore ?—whence ?—what new event ?

Perit. [*Reads.*] ' My heart 's too full to vent itself in words.

' I know my conduct will be blam'd by all.

' I will not varnish it with vain excuse.

' I seiz'd your ship : we have already pass'd

' The head-land of the harbour.'

Oh ! this consummates all.

E

Ari. Why dost thou pause?
 Proceed ; go on ; let me drink deep of horror.
[Taking the letter, endeavours to proceed, but cannot. She returns it to Perithous.]

Perit. *[Reads.]* We have already pass'd
 ' The head-land of the harbour : " sunk in grief,
 " Distracted with her fears, in wild amaze,
 " Phædra has join'd my flight.—
 " Is Phædra with him ?

" Arc. They embark'd together."

Ari. *[Reads.]* ' To Ariadne
 ' Be ev'ry duty paid, each tender care,
 ' Assuag'd her sorrows : Perianther's love
 ' Will charm each sense, and teach her to forget ;
 ' Perhaps in time, when ev'ry bliss attends her,
 ' To pardon Phædra, and the wretched Theseus.'
Is Phædra with him ?

Arc. They embark'd together.

" Ari. All just and righteous"— *[Ari. falls on the ground.]*

Perit. Ah ! the faints ! the faints :

Bring instant help ; assist her, lend your aid.

[Enter attendant Virgins.]

Oh ! wretched princess ! would the gods allow you
 To breathe your last, and never wake again
 To this bad world, 'twere happiness indeed !
 She stirs, she moves ; the blood returns again,
 But oh ! to make her feel the weight of woe,
 And see the desolation that surrounds her.

" Ari. Where have my senses wander'd ? Why around me

" Are you all fix'd, the statues of despair ?

" Oh ! I remember—Open earth, and hide me :

" In your cold caves you never yet receiv'd

" A wretch betray'd, undone, and lost as I am.

" Perit." Afflicted mourner, raise thee from the earth.

Thy woes indeed are great.

Ari. O, say—could you believe it ?

[As she rises.]

Phædra has join'd his flight ; she too betrays me.

She was my other self ; for ever dear ;

Dear as the drops that circled in my veins,

But now, ah ! now, to warm this heart no more.

Perhaps even now she gazes on his charms,

Hangs on each accent, catches from those eyes

The sweet enchantment ; " knows I shed these tears ;

" Knows that I beat this breast, and rend this hair,

" And tell my sorrows to these craggy cliffs,

"And rave and shriek, in madness and despair."

Haste, fly, pursue them, launch into the main,

Arm all your ships, bring swords, bring liquid fire,

Fly, overtake them, whelm them in the deep, oh!——

[*Falls into the arms of her attendants.*]

"*Perit.* Attend her, virgins with your tenderest duty

[*Exeunt Ariadne with attendants.*]

"*Arc.* If this be thy contrivance——

"*Perit.* Charge me not

"With a black deed that has undone my friend,

"And to the latest time must brand his name.

"I feel for him; I feel for Ariadne.

"She now demands our sympathy and care.

[*Exeunt.*]

"*The Back Scene opens; the Harbour and the Sea in view.*"

Enter ARIADNE with attendants.

"*Ari.* Behold, look there, see where the vessel bounds,

"Oh: horror, horror! how the rapid prow

"Glides through the waves! Will none pursue the traitor?"

"*1st. Vir.* Alas, my royal mistress, 'tis in vain.

"*Ari.* Turn, Theseus, turn; 'tis Ariadne calls.

"Return barbarian! whither do you fly?

"This way direct your course: stay, Phædra, stay.

"See how they bound along the level main,

"And cleave their way; and catch each gale that blows.

"Inhuman treachery! [*Leans on her attendants.*]

"*Perit.* Her grief exhausts her strength, but soon again

"Despair will rouse her with redoubled force.

"*Ari.* Heart-piercing sight! And see the traitor still

"Pursues his course. Yon' glitt'ring host of stars

"Lend all their rays; the elements combine!

"Ye winds, ye waves, you too are leagu'd against me;

"You join with guilt, accomplices in fraud!

"All false as Theseus; all as Phædra false;

"Officious all to end this wretched being.

"Your victory will soon be gained: 'Tis that pang,

"Or! this cold tremor—'tis the hand of death——

"I hope it is; my grave is all I ask.

[*Sits down on the point of a rock.*]

Enter PERIANDER, PERITHOUS, and ARCHON.

Perian. Oh, dire event!

"*Perit.* See where the beautiful mourner

"Grows to the rock, and thinks herself to stone!"

Perian. Rise, princess, rise, and let us bear you hence
To your own palace, where the storm of grief
Will soon subside, and peace, and love, and joy;
Revisit your sad heart. " [*They lead her forward.*]

" *Ari.* No, never, never;

" My easy heart will be deceiv'd no more.

" *Perian.* For thee love still has new delights in store,
" Whole years of bliss."——

Ari. Why do you smile upon me ?

I never serv'd you ; never sav'd your life ;
Made you no promise : why should you deceive me ?

Perian. May sweet oblivion of her past afflictions
Steal gently o'er her soul. Restore her, heaven !

Ari. Have you a sister ?—She will break your heart.

Perian. I come to calm your griefs, and crown your days
With love sincere, and everlasting truth.

" *Ari.* All truth is fled ; long since she fled the earth,

" Tir'd of her pilgrimage. Why, holy powers !

" Why leave poor mortals crawling here below,

" Where there's no confidence, no truth, no faith !

" All nature moves by your eternal law ;

" Truth is the law of man, and yet she's fled.

" I see her there—there near the throne of Jove,

" Her garments white as her own candid mind ;

" She looks with pity on this vale of error,

" And drops a tear : while falsehood in disguise,

" With specious seeming, walks her deadly round,

" And mask'd in friendship, where she smiles, destroys.

" *Perian.* Let me conduct you : trust your friends."

Ari. You look

As if I might believe you : so did Theseus ;

But where, where is he now ?——' To Ariadne

' Be every duty paid, each tender care !'

Oh ! artful man !——Look there ! I see him still ;

I see the ship ; it lessens to my view,

It lessens still ! and now, just now it fades !

It fades away, it melts into the clouds !

Scarce, scarce perceiv'd ! 'tis gone, 'tis lost,

For ever, ever lost ! is that the last,

'The last sad glimpse ? and must I linger here ?

Die, Ariadne, die, and end your woes.

[*Stabs herself*]

Perian. Oh ! fatal rashness ! quick, bring every help !

Perit. Deep in her veins the poniard drinks her blood.

Ari. 'Twas Theseus' gift : his best, his kindest present ;
As such I sheath'd it in my very heart.

Perian. Her flutt'ring soul is on the wing to leave her.

Ari. Elysium is before me ; let not Theseus

“ Pursue me thither ; in those realms of bliss

“ Let my departed spirit know some rest.

“ Oh ! let me feel ingratitude no more.

“ Keep Theseus here in this abode of guilt ;

“ This world is his ; let him remain with Phædra ;

“ Let him be happy—no, the fates forbid it :

“ They will deceive each other.”

Perian. Ah ! that wound,
Pours fast the stream of life.

Ari. It gives no pain.

It is the stab full perfidy has given,

That rankles here. Oh ! raise me, raise me up.

“ No, let me see the light of heaven no more.”

Perithous, you behold your friend's exploit !

I thank you, Periander ; you have been

Kind, good, and tender. May some worthier bride,

Adorn'd with all that virtue adds to beauty,

Endear the joys of life.—Alas, I die !

No mother here with pious hand to close

My faded eyes ; no father o'er my urn

To drop a tear, and soothe my pensive shade.

“ No ; I deserve it ; I betray'd them both.

“ The barb'rous man !——He stabb'd me to the heart !

“ And yet even then I knew but half my wrongs.”

And you too, Phædra !——Oh !

[*Dies.*

Perian. She's gone, and with her what a noble mind !

What gen'rous virtues are there laid in ruin !

Perit. Thou injur'd innocence ! oppress'd with wrongs,

And sore beset, there rests thy languish'd head.

Oh ! when the gods bestow on mortal man

That bloom of beauty, those exalted charms,

By virtue dignified, they give the best,

The noblest gift their bounty has in store :

A gift to be esteem'd, ador'd by all ;

To be protected by the soldier's valour,

Not thus betray'd, abandon'd to despair,

And the keen pangs of ill requited love.

[*Exeunt Omnes.*

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY I. P. KIMBLE.

Spoken by Mr. WROUGHTON.

*WHENE’ER the Poet, in retiring vein,
Proclaims his purpose ne’er to write again,
The threaten’d Town interprets the kind way,
And takes an interest in his next last play.*

*Not that our Bard has play’d you fast and loose,
Or pleads this general candour for excuse;
He dares not trifle with the public sense,
But thinks such folly downright impudence;
Brought, not advancing, since he then appears,
To risk the well won fame of forty years,
He trusts distinct indulgence you’ll afford—
Not he, but Ariadne, breaks his word.*

*From ancient stores we take our plot to-night,
Form’d on the mournful tale of Theseus’ flight;
The time, that golden Era, some relate,
When equal Minos rul’d the Cretan state.*

*Hail, holy Sage! who taught’st licentious man
To find his freedom where the laws began;
Whose fame in arms, redoubt’d from afar,
From thine own shores deter’d invasive war—
Whilst thy mild genius o’er a prosperous isle
Gave every good and every grace to smile;
’Till thine to all thy subjects were as dear,
As George’s virtues to his Britons here.*

*To all our author bids me humbly bend,
But deprecate no foe, and court no friend:
With grateful pride he thinks of honours past,
And hopes you’ll bid those valu’d honours last.
Freely to you he now commends his cause—
Should he deserve—you’ll not withhold applause.*

EPILOGUE.

*LADIES—though scarce alive—quite out of breath,
I come—to talk a little after death;
When tir'd of woe, and daggers, and all that,
Nothing revives us like a little chat.*

*Now—so the laws of Epilogue ordain,
All should be turn'd to jest, and flippant strain;
And I, with points most miserably witty,
Should play the mimic, and lampoon the city.*

*Far other motives bid me now appear;
Far other sentiments are struggling here:
I come to view this circle, fair and bright,
And thank you for each tear you've shed to-night;
The tear, that gives the soft endearing grace;
Virtues cosmetic for the loveliest face;
That shows the features in their genuine hue,
Like roses blushing through the morning dew.*

*Ye men,—ye boasted lords of the creation,
Who give your Ariadnes such vexation;
May I approach you, pray? and may I dare
Ask why you droop?—and why that languid air?
'Tis sympathy in guilt; and Theseus' case
With rising blushes crimsons ev'ry face;
Censure on fraud like his, you own, must fall:
Too well you know—he represents you all.*

*And yet you've some excuse; these modish days
Lend a few tints to varnish all your ways.*

EPILOGUE.

*When a GRAND SWEEPSTAKES to Newmarket calls,
And FIVE TO FOUR each groom, each jockey hawls :
What beauty then can lure you from the course,
And hope—you'll love her BETTER than your HORSE?*

*When to the Club the gaming rage invites,
And fascinating FARO claims your nights ;
The tender passion then intrudes no more,
And FORTUNE is the VENUS you adore.
But is she constant ?—Loss on loss ensues,
And bonds, and mortgages, attorneys, Jews :
Love then may well his softer rights forego,
Spread his light wings, and fly the scene of woe.*

*But now the times a nobler plea may yield ;
A War invites you ;—arm, and take the field.
The SONS OF FRANCE would fain subvert your laws ;
Go forth the champions of your country's cause.
Behold the bright example of the day,
Go—where our ROYAL FREDERICK leads the way ;
So Albion's liberties secure shall stand,
And KING, and LORDS, and COMMONS guard the land.*



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